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Part B: Lessons Learned on the Afghanistan Immediate Needs Program Nangarhar Province, January 2005 - January 2006

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Part of USAID Afghanistan Alternative Livelihoods
Contract Number 306-C-00-05-00513-00

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February 31, 2006

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Introduction and Background

This document is Part B of the final report of Afghanistan Immediate Needs Program (AINP) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Development Alternatives (DAI). It is an attempt to capture some of the lessons learned during the year spent implementing AINP from December 2004 to January 2006. The more quantitative results of the project may be found in Part A of the AINP final report, and details of the 260 village-level projects implemented in Nangarhar Province may be found in an annex to that report.

Creating a larger-than-usual report of lessons learned was warranted by some unusual circumstances faced by AINP. For one thing, it was implemented in Nangarhar Province, in the eastern region of Afghanistan, where most farmers gave up opium poppy from one year to the next. The cultural and social context of the project has certain unique qualities, some of which proved helpful for project implementation, and that cultural environmental required a learning process. In general. being in rural Afghanistan in 2005 required facing a somewhat unsettled environment. The contractor, DAI, has a long history in Afghanistan; but conditions have been changing so quickly that knowledge gathered years before, or from other regions, was only partially relevant to the project based in Nangarhar. USAID/Jalalabad was very helpful, but its staff was also learning how a civilian agency might function in rural Nangarhar. In more prosaic terms, AINP was relatively large for a one-year project, and it required a near instantaneous start-up. It did manage to exceed its targets.

Therefore, this report aims to capture some of what was learned, so that a new project might start from a higher level of awareness.

Of course, each project environment presents its own conditions. Neither DAI nor USAID can say that the AINP experience can be replicated with similar results. A report like this can only explain what happened in a particular case and time. Other parts of Afghanistan are more or less violent and risky than Nangarhar, and local society might offer less support than did the people of Nangarhar. So the strategies that are presented here could have been overwhelmed by the sort of violent opposition reported elsewhere in Afghanistan. With that caveat, it is possible that some of the strategies described here may be applicable elsewhere.

Of the lessons learned, the following stand out:

1. DAI, a civilian contractor, found that effective work in rural areas of Nangarhar Province -- a medium-security region of Afghanistan -- was feasible with appropriate, but not costly or overly restrictive, strategies for security. Support from villagers, provincial government, and USAID was sufficient to overcome challenges.

AINP Senior Engineers

2. Working in an area where Coalition Forces were moderately active was feasible in this part of Afghanistan. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) provided refuge diring the May 11 disturbances. DAI did two subprojects that included inputs from Civil Affairs and was able to identify potential places for school construction for USAID assistance to a Quick Impact Program.
3. The villagers of Nangarhar worked hard on the AINP subprojects which, besides paying a wage, were of interest to the villages themselves. The local staff, also largely from Nangarhar, worked very well. Villagers appreciated a participatory approach, immediate delivery of work, and clear communications.
4. The general objective of the project – to provide employment for people who had given up poppy production – proved feasible. Farmers and villagers do not require that development programs replace 100% of the income that they would have received from poppy; they do want to see a general reciprocity and the potential for a decent life in the future. Reduction of Nangarhar opium resulted mostly from a political decision by the government and tribes; eradication was an important secondary part of the outcome.
5. The presence of USAID/Jalalabad in the region was positive. USAID provided an institutional framework for the work, assisted with problems, and verified work, all important contributions. The clarity of the goals for AINP was a help.
6. Some implementation strategies that worked well were agreed targets for allocating resources, rapid replication of early successes, delivery of work in all the settled parts of the province (i.e. areas with agricultural production, even the more remote areas).
7. AINP was able to learn about Nangarhar on the job. Several participatory workshops, geographic information (a small GIS effort), surveys of villages, a small worker survey, monitoring and evaluation checks on subprojects, and security monitoring are examples of some of the modest information-gathering tools that were used and may be expanded.

What was AINP?

The Afghanistan Immediate Needs Program (AINP) was a development project conceived and financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). AINP was implemented by a contractor, Development Alternatives (DAI). The project worked in Nangarhar Province from December 2004 to January 2006. It put large numbers of rural people to work on village infrastructure that had been neglected or destroyed during 25 years of warfare and drought.

AINP Goals and the Objective of Alternative Livelihoods

Nangarhar Province was a traditional opium-poppy-growing area in eastern Afghanistan, but in late 2004 most farmers gave up the crop at government urging. In AINP, USAID sought a substantial employment generation program that would reach many of the former poppy growers throughout the province.

In general terms, the outputs of AINP were very clear from the start – to create employment on subprojects that would leave some lasting benefit for villagers or help vulnerable households. The simplicity of the concept was a great help. Of course, implementation did involve many issues and some complexity, but the goals were a clear compass for navigating the process.

When USAID invited DAI to discuss a project in late November 2004, they judged that creating employment was an urgent task because the 2004 – 2005 poppy-planting season had already started. In fact, USAID wanted AINP to start delivering benefits within weeks.

AINP by the Numbers

2.97
million labor days achieved

15%
labor days worked by women

80%
program funds directly benefiting Afghans

134
thousand workers participated

149
km of roads rehabilitated

232
culverts built to protect those roads

600
villages benefitted

1,085
flood protection walls erected

2,184
km of irrigation canals desilted

The governor of Nangarhar and local authorities were also calling for immediate, substantial benefits for the farmers who had given up growing poppy.
USAID defined the objectives for AINP as follows:

> Sustainable development in Afghanistan depends on eliminating the opium economy that currently is said to account for 50 or 60 percent of the economy. The Afghanistan Immediate Needs Project (AINP) will help Afghans affected by eradication of poppy cultivation to build alternative livelihoods in the short term. If such assistance is not available, the farmers of Nangarhar may reconsider their decision to reduce or eliminate poppy cultivation.
>
> The urgent need to commence the Afghanistan Immediate Needs Project (AINP) activities in Nangarhar Province follows from the schedule of poppy cultivation and eradication in that Area. The project should be generating employment in January 2005.
>
> AINP is of sufficient scale to reach a considerable proportion of the Nangarhar population while larger alternative livelihoods projects are being developed. However, it will be effective only if it is implemented immediately.

AINP had two specific goals:

1. To generate employment (involving 2.375 million days of paid labor and material support) and

2. To support household income-generating activities (5,000 families, involving 125,000 days of paid labor and material support).

In total, about 2,500,000 days of employment were to be generated immediately, with the target to employ 50,000 people to work 50 days each, representing the sum of employment generation and household income support activities (taken from AINP Statement of Work).

Thus, AINP had clear goals, with a need for exceptional speed in getting to work and a challenge to reach the areas of Nangarhar Province where poppy had been cultivated.

Background: Social Conditions in Nangarhar

Nangarhar Province lies on the eastern border of Afghanistan and is served by the major highway that runs between the capital Kabul and Peshawar in Pakistan. The provincial capital, Jalalabad, is a medium-sized commercial and administrative center, with a population that is growing quickly. The city has a university and sufficient services to maintain an office with good communications.

AINP was oriented to the rural parts of the province, and social conditions in the rural parts of Nangarhar are not well documented. AINP learned enough of the basic social features of the province to operate successfully, and most of the staff are from Nangarhar or have lived in the province before.

This introduction to the Nangarhar Province will serve to put AINP in its social context, noting some of the lessons learned. It provides considerable detail because the cultural context of the project was so important, and many of the characteristics are related to project design. The information comes from the AINP Village Survey (Community Atlas) and AINP Worker Survey, among other sources, and the information on opium production comes from UN surveys.

Poppy in Nangarhar

The most relevant condition for AINP is Nangarhar's history as a producer of opium poppy.

Opium poppy plantings in Nangarhar Province averaged 17,000 hectares for the crops harvested between 1994 and 2005. That period includes three peak years, the latest in 2004 (28,213 hectares). The low year was 2001 under the Taliban (218 hectares). Over the same period since 1994, Nangarhar planted an average of 23 percent of Afghanistan's total area planted to opium poppy. (Data are taken from the UNDCP "Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2001" and the "Summary Findings of Opium Trends in Afghanistan, 2005".)

In late 2004, the governor and police chief of Nangarhar supported the national policy to abandon poppy production. In several meetings with village and tribal elders and district police chiefs, the governor reiterated that policy. The village elders took the message back to the farmers. Part of the message to elders and farmers was that international assistance would arrive in the province shortly. A modest USAID seeds distribution program and the arrival of AINP at the end of the planting season reinforced that message.

Most farmers did not plant poppy in November and December of 2004. Further, eradication contributed to the decline in the poppy harvested in Nangarhar in 2005. The province led eradication on 1,860 hectares, according to the UN figures, which covered about 6% of the preceding year's poppy area. According to the UN, farmers only harvested 1,093 hectares in 2005.

The decline in production to the harvest of 2005 may be

calculated from either the long-term average of 17,000 hectares (a decline of 16,000 hectares) or from the boom year of 2004 -- 28,213 hectares. Respectively, the decline would be either 16,000 hectares or 27,000 hectares. Either one is a very substantial figure.

USAID's rationale for AINP drew on the rapid decline in poppy planting in December 2004:

> The Governor of the Province stated that farmers have eliminated poppy production in all but four Districts of the Province, and even in those four Districts only a minority of farms have planted poppy this season. There has been no promise of recompense to farmers, but they are expecting immediate development assistance for this agricultural season.
>
> Licit activities will not generate the equivalent of poppy sales for most farmers, but as eradication proceeds, support for licit activities may prove sufficiently effective so that farmers see licit activities as the best choice.

This decline in the area planted to poppy was the rationale for the scope and urgency of AINP.

Towards the end of the project AINP performed a detailed survey of its workers which is discussed at length later in this report. One of the questions the survey asked was why farmers who stopped growing poppy chose to make that decision. The results were surprising and stressed the potential impact of the central government and international donor efforts.

Why did you stop growing poppy?
(multiple answers accepted)

Asked by the President to do so	37%
In order to receive donor monies	25%
Islam says it is unlawful	15%
Wished to avoid eradication	12%
It's a dangerous occupation	9%
Asked by the Provincial Governor to do so	7%
Asked by a village leader to do so	3%

The history of growing opium affected the project at many points. Though farmers did not grow much poppy, there was still a stock of opium in the area, and hence frequent reports of destruction of functioning laboratories or capture of heroin. This affected where AINP could work with relative ease, and where there was danger. The reduction of poppy meant that villagers were eager to work on AINP projects and felt that they were due some support.

Photo of poppy field in Nangarhar taken by an AINP engineer. AINP did not work in the few areas continuing to cultivate poppy

Local Leaders and Government Presence in the Villages

The requirement that AINP reach the villages of Nangarhar, a province of continuing social unrest, meant that it had to be a participatory project, and so it was defined from the start:

> Achievement of both [of AINP's] objectives must actively involve participation from local leaders, district-and provincial-level government officials, in the selection, design, mobilization, and implementation of the Immediate Needs program.

If a project wants to start work in the rural parts of Nangarhar, it needs to deal with village and tribal leaders, as well as the government authorities at the provincial and district level. "Village" in this context refers to a cluster of settlements that have one larger settlement and several smaller ones.

Who are the village authorities? Knowledgeable people will tell you that every village is supposed to have a malek, mullah, mirab, and shura.

Malek: headman who serves as a link to the district government.
Mullah: religious leader
Mirab: "water master" who is in charge of keeping the sources of agricultural irrigation working.
Shura: the council of elders of the village.

The two that constitute the government presence in the village are likely to be the district police chief and the school teacher. Nangarhar is a relatively well-educated province that has supplied teachers for other provinces. There may or may not be a school in the village, but there is likely to be a government teacher in any larger town, even in the more remote parts of the province, where children may be studying under a tree of in an open field. In village workshops, AINP found a strong demand for school buildings, and this corresponds to the presence of teachers.

The police do not have a permanent presence in most villages, as they are based in the district centers, but they do visit from time to time. There are also religious teachers, and the religious teachers may supplement the government teachers. To a lesser extent, the army may visit.

At the district level, there is a subgovernor chosen by the provincial governor, as well as several staff of the government ministries, particularly agriculture. There are also tribal leaders who are particularly valuable when there is a conflict between villages.

In other villages, government services are limited. For example, road maintenance machinery is often the sign of government presence, and the AINP village survey showed that most villages have roads that were made by hand and are maintained by hand. Agricultural extension workers rarely visit, and basic medical services are very limited in the villages.

Village and Government Authorities in the Villages of Nangarhar

Village Authority	Percent of Villages	Government Presence	Percent of Villages
Headman or malek	99%	Police visits	86%
Religious leader or mullah	92%	Government teacher	71%
Village council or shura	85%	School classes (not necessarily building)	55%
Water master or mirab	60%	Army visits	48%
Said or pacha	52%	Secondary school	29%
Commander or mujahid	46%	District subgovernor	24%
Wealthy land owner or khan	44%	Machinery used for road to village	13%
Women's shura	7%	Extension worker visits	9%
Money lender	7%	Doctor or nurse visits	7%

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006

The lesson learned for AINP is that in most villages there is a functioning village and tribal structure that should be respected and that offers a development project a way to work at the village level.

This was a tremendous asset. The district authorities must be acknowledged and are most important during the initial stages of rural projects and for resolving conflicts (see below) as they arise. On the other hand, the presence of government in most villages is modest. In some countries, it is possible to implement projects through government extension agents, but that capacity is not yet in place in much of Nangarhar.

Roads and Commerce

While AINP was supposed generate employment, its works were intended to be of lasting benefit.

> The principal objective of AINP is to provide licit employment in Nangarhar to benefit the population as the opium economy shrinks. It is a quick program to set-up and implement activities (subprojects) that are labor-intensive in the short term and with positive impact in the longer term.

The kinds of investments that will have a lasting impact will vary with the level of commercial activity in a place. Where the economy is not commercial, it is too possible to build infrastructure that the local economy is not ready to use.

The villages surveyed by AINP – and these are the larger villages – have limited commercial infrastructure. Few have even a weekly market. Only a third say that they sell products to outsiders in the village bazaar.

Transportation is also challenging. 15% are reached by walking, and the roads are bad enough that an additional 22% are served by hardy small cars, but not by trucks. For those with road access, the travel time from Jalalabad is less than four hours, with a median of 1.5 hours.

Commercial Development and Commercial Agriculture in Nangarhar Villages			
Bazar weekly	11%	Principal product sold	Wheat
Bazar daily	19%	Second product sold	Corn
Money lender	7%	Third product sold	Cotton or barley
Cars and trucks reach village	63%*	a) Presence of one or more tractors; b) presence of oxen for ploughing	a) 60%, b) 62%
Median distance from village to Jalalabad	45 km	Presence of a diesel mill for wheat	71%
Median time in auto to Jalalabad (maximum)	1 hour 30 minutes (up to 4 hours)	Sales to outsiders in the bazaar	32%
Presence of any kind of factory	1%	Sell agricultural products in Jalalabad	11%

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006, Cars only reach village 22%. Neither cars nor trucks reach village 15%.

The lesson for AINP from these conditions was that projects should focus on the most basic needs of the population. In practice, that meant irrigation facilities of basic design, flood protection walls, roads, and household production for consumption and limited sales. The project should use traditional ways to move money and should not depend on a banking or commercial system. (In practice, this meant that AINP transported money or used the hawala system for lack of financial institutions at the village level.) The project should not look for village companies ready to perform as subcontractors, branch offices of banks, or other service-providers.

On the other hand, the limited commercial development, lack of mechanized road maintenance, etc. meant that AINP could count on large supplies of manual labor, and that the kinds of labor-intense works that AINP could produce

would be appropriate for the area. If well chosen, they could be of great and lasting importance. In a society well supplied with bulldozers, graders, and backhoes, the contribution of a work crew of 400 men with shovels and some cement might be of secondary importance or aesthetic, as would be the case when the work crews clear bush beside a tarmac road. But in a society with no such capital, a work crew of 400 can have lasting impact. By improving roads by hand, a whole village might gain access to new services; or by clearing and deepening a canal, their agricultural area might be increased.

Finally, a lesson learned from these conditions was that the project staff would have establish district offices. The travel times to the large villages from Jalalabad range up to four hours. Given that the project sites are even further away on worse roads, it is clear that for most of the sites, travel time from Jalalabad to the work site was too great to allow commuting. Within a few weeks of starting work, AINP developed an alternative. The project set up district project offices where the engineers could sleep from Saturday to Tuesday, returning to the central office on Wednesdays. This proved to be a successful strategy not only for managing the work, but also for establishing good relations with villagers.

Learning about Local Conditions: The Diversity of Irrigation

AINP staff never stopped learning about local conditions related to producing lasting, positive impact. The diversity of irrigation systems is an example. In Nangarhar, wherever people can irrigate, they can produce crops -- one crop (more than 90% of villages), two crops (74% of villages), and sometimes three crops (10% of villages). There is some rainfed agriculture without irrigation, principally on snow melt or March rains -- poppy is often a rainfed crop – but the bulk of licit agriculture is irrigated.

The diversity of irrigation systems that AINP encountered was greater than the international staff had expected. In the beginning of the project, the international staff considered only simple irrigation canals with standard elements: an intake on a river, a canal, branch canals, and perhaps some drainage. But the reality, as documented by the AINP village survey, is that springs and karezes (subterranean tunnels described later) together serve more villages than “run of the river” canals. The initial district workshops, as described below, brought home the message that villagers had many kinds of irrigation system.

The lesson learned was that working on the critical problem of water for irrigation would require several different kinds of projects. After AINP successfully undertook pilot projects, it found that it was possible to work on karez rehabilitation, small empoundments to hold water from springs, and other village-level infrastructure that would improve agricultural production.

Diverse Irrigation and Domestic Water Sources in Nangarhar Villages			
Villages practices irrigated agriculture	87%	Village gets third crop in a year	10%
Village gets second crop in a year	74%	Drinking water source is river	30%
Irrigation source is river	47%	Drinking water source is spring	34%
Irrigation source is spring	36%	Drinking water source is karez	35%
Irrigation source is karez	34%	Drinking water source is well dug by machine	28%
Irrigation source is tubewell	20%	Drinking water source is tanker truck	0%
Irrigation source is NVDA canal	10%	Drinking water source is well dug by hand	71%
Village practices rainfed agriculture	34%		

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006

Social Conditions, Refugees and Women

AINP was also supposed to work with the population that could not participate in the kinds of labor-intense activities that would constitut the bulk of the project.

> As a second objective AINP will help establish an economic safety net for those persons who are unable to participate in alternative employment activities or have no resources to secure basic livelihood and are considered vulnerable households.

The AINP worker survey confirmed that “returnees” comprise a large proportion of the population served by AINP.

The AINP village survey confirmed that in most villages, women do not do agricultural labor. They plough, cultivate, and mill cereals in less than 10% of villages. In some villages, but a minority, they do harvest and gather wood.

Women do handicrafts and take care of animals in most villages.

The AINP village survey showed that nomads (kuchis) visit Nangarhar on their yearly migration from summer pastures in Kabul and northern Afghanistan to winter pastures in Pakistan.

Social Conditions and Women			
Nomads (Kuchis) come to village	58%	Women make handicrafts	83%
Most frequently cited months when kuchis are present	November and December	Women bring water	91%
Women’s most frequent agricultural task: harvest	29%	Are there months when people do not have enough to eat?	93%
Women care for animals	70%	Most frequently cited months when people are hungry	December, January, February

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006

AINP’s original goals set for working with women and former refugees was that, together, they would total 11% of beneficiaries. In reality, the proportion of recent returnees was so high in the rural parts of Nangarhar that this goal was easily exceeded. On the other hand, social conditions for working with women were a constraint. Projects under the Household Income Support component were oriented to crafts, animal care, and home gardens.

Conflict

Conflict has to be a concern or any project in eastern Afghanistan. According to the village survey, 5 per cent of the villages reported an explosion in the village in the previous year.

Indigenous conflict is also a concern. In Nangarhar Province, conflict over land or marital matters is not uncommon between brothers, families, or villages. Almost a quarter of villages have an ongoing dispute with other villages about land, principally about rainfed cropland or pastures. Presumably, occupation of irrigated land by one or another village is clear, but conflicts among family members within a village over irrigated land is not uncommon.

Conflict resolution in the village relies on the malek and shura, followed by the mullah. Given the degree of isolation of the villages, the involvement of the district subgovernor in 65% of villages is striking. In contrast, “commanders” (sometimes called war lords) are looked to for conflict resolution in 32% of villages.

Cause of Conflict	% of Villages
Land conflict with another village	23%
Most frequent type of land conflict with another village, in order of occurrence	Rainfed cropland, pasture, water, irrigated land
Explosion in village in last year	5%
Commander or mujahid as village authority (among others – see above)	46%

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006

Person Helping Resolve Conflict	% of Villages
Headman or malek	90%
Village council or shura	78%
District subgovernor	65%
Religious leader or mullah	57%
Police	39%
Commander or mujahid	32%
Said or pacha	23%
Other authority	20%
Water master or mirab	17%
Wealthy land owner or khan	17%
Other government	3%
Women's shura	1%

Source: AINP Village Survey 2006

There is much to learn in this data on conflict and conflict resolution.

This reported occurrence of explosions in the villages was enough to cause concern, but not so high that work would be impossible. Subjectively, it may be underestimated because villagers tended to discount security risks; but, even so, the level was sufficient to call for caution, but not enough to stop the work.

The level of conflict within and between villages was a concern, and it affected several AINP subprojects.

More important, there was a functioning system to dampen conflict and resolve problems. The maleks and shuras of the villages were a resource for managing conflict. This was invaluable for implementing subprojects. It meant that once the shuras had agreed to a project, they would be able to resolve conflicts.

The information about the commanders or mujahid is ambivalent. If one were to accept the stereotype, sometimes seen in the press, that the government is absent outside of Kabul, and that the rifle is the law of the land, then the involvement of a commander in conflict resolution in a third of villages would seem to be much less than expected. If one were to judge by an ideal of civil society in which armed strength is irrelevant, then it would seem high. In fact, the commanders do exist, as do dealers in opium, but they do not dominate the scene in Nangarhar.

AINP learned about social conditions in Nangarhar as the project proceeded. The village survey was done late in the project and confirmed much of what had been learned. The lack of knowledge did not stop AINP, but it would have been useful near the start, perhaps after the first subprojects had established credibility.

The Strategy for AINP Implementation

Pre-project preparation – USAID and TWG

Before AINP began operations, several important structures were already in place in Nangarhar. These included the following:

1. **The Alternative Livelihoods Technical Working Group (TWG),** which later became part of the Provincial Development Council, had worked on distributing seed and fertilizer for the 2004 – 2005 planting season. The TWG was chaired by the provincial director of the RRD and included the provincial directors of Agriculture and Water, with a representative of the Governor of Nangarhar and of the donor for a given project -- in this case, USAID/Jalalabad.

   The TWG, led by a particularly dynamic RRD director, continued to be an effective counterpart institution for AINP. Most importantly, it lead introductory workshops in all of the districts of the Province with DAI support, checked and approved field activities, and resolved issues as they came up. Late in the project, after a change of government and directors, the TWG was less active than it had been; the effectiveness of the TWG, particularly in the first eight months of the project, was a high standard that helped AINP be effective.

2. **The USAID/Jalalabad office was located in Jalalabad** at the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) compound, which allowed frequent and effective communications with USAID. The presence of USAID representatives, who knew the principal actors and the conditions on the ground, was very positive. One later took the role of Coginizant Technical Officer (CTO) with capacity to approve activities; having such a person in the area speeded approvals and implementation.

In particular, working relations between USAID/ Jalalabad and the Governor of Nangarhar were very productive. The Governor, who had decreed an end to poppy cultivation in the province, was very eager for the international donors to implement projects in the province. The prior relationship between USAID and the Governor facilitated communications between AINP and government, allowed for resolution of issues, and helped the contractor stay in touch with government without spending excessive time on the task.

3. A pattern in which **villager councils or headmen** petitioned aid in writing from the government, and the examples from prior projects of participatory nomination of project ideas by village councils, meant that many village elders knew something about the operations of a project. USAID/ Jalalabad had gathered petitions in May 2004 with participation of RRD; some were the basis for the first AINP subprojects. Further, three districts had Community Development Councils (CDCs) under the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which meant that at least the government workers were familiar with participatory activities.

4. **Prior reconstruction work:** UN agencies and NGOs had built some infrastructure, particularly in parts of the province that were most accessible from Jalalabad. Relief International, IF Hope, BRAC, German Agro-Action, Madeira, and others had shown that village-level projects and training programs with women were feasible.

AINP benefited from the work of organizations in some areas. On the other hand, the challenge for AINP was to achieve a volume of work that was new for the province. AINP had to cover many villages that had not participated in NGO programs before and were perceived to be too remote or dangerous for NGO work. Much of AINP's work was in villages where neither the government nor NGOs were working.

Pilot Activities and a Fast Start

AINP was required to start work without delay, which proved feasible. On December 13, 2004, Development Alternatives (DAI) sent a team to Afghanistan to negotiate a contract. By January 6, AINP and the TWG were implementing workshops in all of the 23 districts of Nangarhar. More surprisingly, by that date the project had begun pilot subprojects at the village level to implement rehabilitation of an irrigation system and to prune olive trees on a government farm.

By the end of January, the workshops (which will be described below in some detail) had produced a priority list of 86 projects, each identified by village elders in a district assembly, then prioritized by the TWG and approved by the Governor of Nangarhar. By the end of the month, 1,000 people were working on AINP subprojects.

Working on a flood protection wall

The benchmark for AINP were to have 1,000 people employed in January, 4,000 people at work in February, and 8,000 in March. For the rest of the project, the goal was maintain a level of employment between 10,000 and 12,000 people per day. By the end of February, 4,700 laborers were working daily, and by the end of March the number rose to 9,930. Later, there would be crises that took employment below the benchmark range, and the project would have to compensate with higher levels of employment; but the fast-start approach was sound and feasible.

How was the fast start accomplished?

The first, positive element was that USAID had already set up a framework.

Another element was that USAID required DAI to complete its proposal in Jalalabad, rather than in Kabul. This proved feasible and beneficial, despite the hurdles encountered. The usual physical barriers included an unusually cold and wet winter, terrible road conditions, cloud-cover that impeded communications, lack of amenities like electricity at night, etc. Subcontractor RI provided a room to serve as the AINP office, and USAID/Jalalabad helped with communications and the occasional hospitality warm meal. The lesson learned was that Jalalabad had sufficient resources to allow an office to function with certain supplementary investments, such as generators, satellite-based communications, guest houses, an office in a house compound, etc.

A third element was that the start-up team was sufficient in size and experience. Setting up the office was a challenge met by sending out a home-office startup team with experienced staff and by hiring known people. DAI has the advantage of having worked in Pakistan and Afghanistan several times over decades, and getting a core of trustworthy, experienced staff was possible. The home office start-up team included four senior staff members, and other senior people assisted in the field and from the home office.

Another challenge was that the project had to do much smaller projects than had been foreseen. AINP had planned to do a limited number of large projects, following the model of some earlier work done by DAI in southern Afghanistan, were manually cleaning drainage canals was feasible. Ten projects, each employing 1,000 workers, seemed feasible. But the nominations process for identifying subprojects encountered a simple truth: village authorities usually think of village-scale projects, and the population of Nangarhar is scattered over a huge landscape. At the other end of the spectrum, sometimes elders thought of projects so large – like a dam, or a major road – that they were beyond the scale of AINP. Later sections will return to the question of small projects.

Finally, skepticism was another substantial hurdle for AINP. Some farmers, maleks, authorities, and even some officials did not believe that the project would achieve its goals. The fast start itself helped to resolve that issue – it gave the team in the field a can-do spirit, made the effort credible, and proved very useful in dealing with villagers.

District Shura Workshops: What do Villages Want?

Among the first activities of AINP, within two weeks of arriving in the province, was a series of workshops in all

Training of facilitators workshop in Jalalabad, January 5, 2005

the 23 districts of Nangarhar that resulted in identification of projects for the rest of the year. AINP worked with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Technical Working Group, as well as the Governor of Nangarhar, to hold workshops in which village representatives proposed projects for their area. All of the ministries provided facilitators to conduct the workshops.The AINP/MRRD method involved more than 2,000 people representing their home villages in District councils, as well as 300 in Jalalabad City. The rural people nominated 3,000 projects and the urban leaders another 300.

The work began on January 5 to train the facilitators from Ministries of RRD, Agriculture, and Water. The Governor participated in the facilitators' workshop, and he convened the District workshops or councils. The District workshops or councils were held on January 8 and 9 in the district centers.

The following institutions participated:

- Shuras of each district
- Governor of Nangarhar
- MRRD and RRD
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of IWRE
- Sub-governors of each District
- Chief of Police of each District
- Program assistants of the United Nations as observers and participants

Officials of the MRRD from Kabul and AINP visited several Districts during the workshops. The MRRD advisors, financed by the UN, took part in some of the District councils.

The facilitators and one representative of each District brought in the project ideas from the District gatherings to Jalalabad on January 10 and 11. The project ideas came in as hand-written lists in Pashtu. AINP staff translated the proposals, wrote them in data files, entered them in a database, and coded them with some of the traits that would make them more or less suitable for AINP. AINP assisted with data processing on the January 12 to 14. The result was a database of projects for each district.

The compilation of project ideas included the following activities, each nominated 50 times or more: irrigation works, buildings of any kind, roads, protection walls, agriculture, craft programs, dams, drinking water, credit programs, housing for returnees, literacy programs, tree planting, and repairing buildings. The District workshops did not identify very large projects; participatory input for such projects requires a different procedure that involves more technical, social and economic experts.

Type of Activity Proposed by the District Councils	Number	Percent
Irrigation	576	19
Building (any kind of building, including schools, clinics, factories)	462	15
Roads (including repair and new roads)	390	13
Protection (walls for erosion control, flood control)	245	8
Agriculture (including extension)	232	8
Craft (including weaving, sewing, mechanical, and many more)	222	7
Dams (including check dams, small dams, large dams)	208	7
Drinking water (including piped systems, wells, and others)	204	7
Credit (mostly micro credit)	196	6
Housing for returnees (mostly with local materials)	104	3
Literacy (for adults and children during vacation)	79	3
Tree planting and nurseries	66	2
Repair infrastructure (mostly buildings)	53	2
Other	15	0
Professional training or support	11	0
Not clear	11	0
Total	3074	100

Prepared by USAID/DAI January 24, 2004

The lists include three kinds of potential projects:

1) Potentially appropriate for employment generation,

2) Potentially appropriate for household income support and training, and

3) Potentially appropriate for long-term projects.

On January 15, 2005, the Governor of Nangarhar convened the Technical Working Group to see how far the workshops had progressed to gather potential projects identified by the village councils and maleks. At that time, AINP worked with the TWG to present a report of preliminary results. The Governor of Nangarhar accepted the report and put AINP in his perspective of the decision to stop planting poppy.

From January 16 to 18, the results of the workshops were reviewed, grouped, and selected as priorities by the Alternative Livelihoods Technical Working Group (TWG), with a delegate of the MRRD/UN/Kabul at the suggestion of Omar Zakhilwal.

There were 1,519 project nominations suitable for AINP, including

- Flood protection walls (simple structures, not major masonry walls)
- Irrigation works (particularly canals)
- Roads (village roads, not main roads)
- Dams (small dams)

Even at this early stage, it was clear that few of the nominated projects would employ 1,000 workers (see cluster approach, below).

By the requests of the councils, there is strong demand for some kinds of Household and Family Income Support and Training. Most frequently suggested programs are the following:

- Credit programs
- Crafts and skills training
- Agricultural programs (especially domestic production of poultry)
- Housing for returnees
- Literacy programs
- Digging wells

Long-term Economic Development is not part of the AINP, so some projects were declined as too complex or not sufficiently labor intensive, among them the following:

- Building clinics and schools
- Some drinking water projects
- Investment in productive infrastructure – mostly agribusiness factories
- Several kinds of agricultural development

Some larger roads were mentioned, but these were not the focus of the District workshops.

On January 18, the TWG met with the Governor of Nangarhar to review the projects and the priorities. The Governor's deputy chaired the meeting, and the Governor himself called several times from Kabul during the meeting to follow progress. USAID/Jalalabad participated. The TWG and Governor approved projects for each District of Nangarhar (including Torghar and Spinghar, though these mountainous areas have not be officially recognized as districts).

The proposed projects were the basis for all of the work done by AINP.

Several lessons were learned from these workshops for AINP and applicable to other projects.

- Broad, participatory workshops were no hindrance to getting started with subprojects. Villagers identified many feasible, beneficial projects relevant to their lives.

- The workshops provided substantial numbers of potential projects because village delegates were articulate spokesmen and the facilitators were using a methodology that encouraged participation.

- Some kinds of projects were chosen more than others in each district, which helps to set priorities.

- Women did not participate. For implementing the household support component of AINP, a different method was used.

- If you ask villagers what they want, most of the responses will be village-level project corresponding to village needs.

- The monetary expense of the workshops was minimal. The constraint on getting useful information was analytic, not gathering ideas.

- The process is proceeding to implementation of simple projects for employment generation was very fast: priorities set within weeks and projects in the field immediately after.

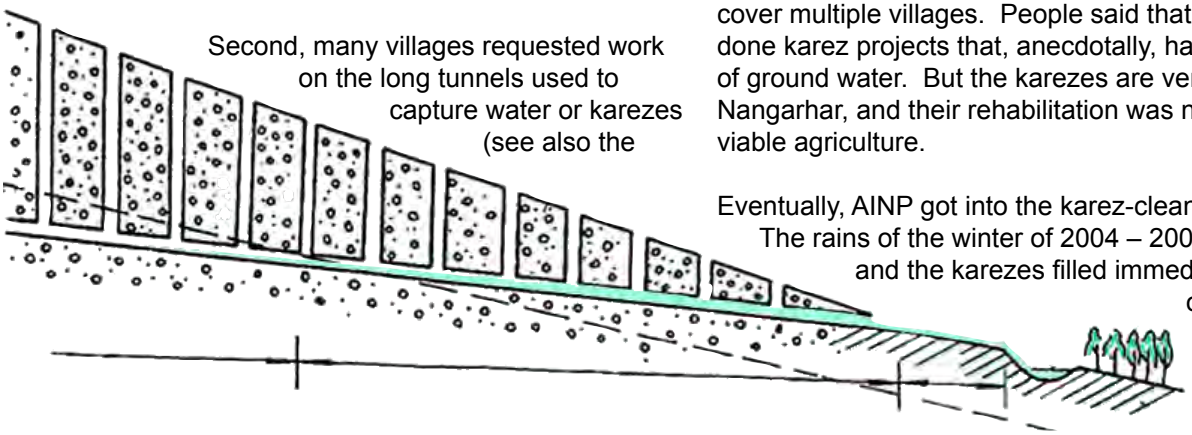
- Even most of these simple projects required field reports for design at the start of implementation, but since the technologies were so simple, the delays for implementation were minor. Larger and more complex projects will require other methods.

Choosing Subproject Types: Flood Protection Walls, Canal Cleaning, Roads

In general, the criteria for choosing subprojects for employment generation under AINP were that the activity would generate immediate employment, that the average cost of materials for all subprojects be around 20% to 30% (allowing a range for individual subprojects), that the technology be relatively simple, and that the project be nominated by village representatives.

Rehabilitation of irrigation canals and roads was no surprise at all. But there were some surprises. First, the frequency with which villages requested flood protection walls and other erosion control structures was notable. Consequently, flood protection walls became a project priority.

Second, many villages requested work on the long tunnels used to capture water or karezes (see also the discussion of the AINP Village Survey, above). A karez is a long underground tunnel that slowly gathers ground water. It's dug into a hill, so even though the tunnel slopes downward it emerges above ground at the hill's base. There the karez channels its water into a waiting irrigation canal or reservoir. (See figure) Karez systems still operate in Iran, North Africa, China, Pakistan, the Arabian peninsula, and Afghanistan, which according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) still has around 6,500 systems operating. In 2002 Biksham Gujja of the WWF wrote that these systems irrigate some 170,000 hectares of land in Afghanistan and that 10 provinces depend on karezes for more than 40% of their irrigation.



AINP was reluctant to work with karezes because of several factors. The work crews to clean a karez are small. A larger project to clean karezes would have to cover multiple villages. People said that NGOs had done karez projects that, anecdotally, had failed for lack of ground water. But the karezes are very important in Nangarhar, and their rehabilitation was necessary for viable agriculture.

Eventually, AINP got into the karez-cleaning business. The rains of the winter of 2004 – 2005 were plentiful, and the karezes filled immediately. This type of project was very successful.

A worker cleaning the mouth of a karez. Diagram courtesy waterhistory.org

Third, there was considerable support for planting trees, and AINP made an effort to incorporate this activity. There was local expertise at the International Foundation Hope, and some planting material as well. But there were three factors that eliminated tree-planting as an AINP activity. First, tree planting just does not require enough workers to make a dent in the employment goals of such a project, and the ratio of materials costs (the trees) to labor costs was too high to fit into a budget that had to be 70% labor. Second, there are bureaucratic requirements for planting material. Finally, other alternatives livelihoods projects, like ALP, were more suited to the activity.

Choosing subprojects was linked to budgetary limits. AINP needed a mix of projects that would allow it to meet employment goals within a fixed budget. The following were guidelines, not strict limits, and were very useful as such:

- Canal rehabilitation – low materials costs of 10% to 20%. These labor-intense projects could be used to balance others that required more materials.
- Flood protection walls – medium materials costs around 30%. These fit the budget as long as they do not require much machinery.
- Roads rehabilitation – medium to high materials costs over 30%. Highly popular, but require more labor intense projects to balance the budget. AINP focused on labor intensive tasks and tertiary village roads. Surface compactation was not possible within the available budget in most cases, and use of bulldozers was not allowed to keep the projects environmentally low impact. AINP did one road to a district center; the others are either village-to-district roads or labor-intense culverts and drainage in Jalalabad city.

In the end, it cost AINP about $4.30 to generate one day of employment, with about $3.10 going for labor and the rest for materials. AINP did keep the figure for materials low so that the total number of paid days on a fixed budget could be as high or higher than programmed.

In retrospect, the project could have used more for materials, such as machinery for compacting roads or some kinds of irrigation infrastructure that require more cement and less labor. Some irrigation rehabilitation subprojects would have benefited from a modest increase in the cost of materials to allow construction of more structures. Future projects might increase somewhat the budget for materials.

Size of works and project selection

AINP implemented 260 subprojects. The average AINP village-level project was budgeted at $50,000 in direct costs and generated 11,000 days of labor or training.

DAI's original proposal suggested that 54 projects would be enough to generate 2,500,000 days of labor. Each was to cost $230,000 and generate 46,000 days of labor on the average.

The change from a moderate number of larger projects to a large number of modest projects happened in the first month of project implementation. It was not done by design, as the project administration would have been very pleased to clean large drainage ditches or otherwise employ many people at a single project. Rather, it responded to the kinds of projects identified by villagers and the technical requirements to implement them. If villagers tell you that they are most interested in cleaning the village karez, and it only takes a work crew of 25 to 50 people to clean the karez, then there is little chance to employ 500 people.

The smaller the project, the higher the potential costs. One engineer may cover 800 workers on a large ditch cleaning project, but if each project only employs 100 workers at a site, then it is very difficult for the engineer to cover even half of that number of workers.

- Consequently, AINP found itself revising the proposal estimates of oversight engineers, transportation, and monitoring. At the same time, the budget would remain unchanged.
- The number of senior and middle professionals

AINP rehabilitated road in the remote Torghar district

would remain nearly unchanged, but the project would use interns, junior engineers, and local engineers to cover more projects under the direction of each site engineer.
- The project focused on the kinds of projects that villagers found to be of highest priority, thus reducing complexity. For staffing, this meant that the positions planned for agriculturalists could be assigned to engineers.
- Keep the projects simple so that unskilled labor can perform well.
- Hire the cars and drivers needed to serve the multiple project sites, using lower cost local hires.
- Cluster projects to make it easier for one engineer to cover several projects.

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Choosing Where to put Subprojects: Covering the Entire Province

After a year of work, AINP had implemented works in more than 600 villages in Nangarhar, achieving coverage of all of the zones of irrigated agriculture and almost all of the larger villages of the province. The exceptions were parts of Achin District where farmers did not give up cultivating poppy; but in December 2005 AINP even began work in that area when some farmers decided not to plant again.

How did this happen? USAID created a priority ranking for the districts of the province that allocated targets to all of the districts of the province. The highest priority was for districts that have grown poppy traditionally. The rest of the province would be relatively easy.

The allocation was revised slightly during the project to reflect priorities of the Technical Working Group (especially the desire to respond to flooding in the spring of 2005 and its acceptance of some urgent UN projects), and better knowledge about poppy planting (particularly that a few areas had continued to produce poppy in 2005, and that one area had given up poppy at the end of 2005). At the end of the project, allocated and achieved days of employment were very similar.

District	Priority	Allocation, as Revised by the TWG	Achieved Employment Days	Ratio Achieved to Revised Allocation
Achin	1	120,718	143,965	1.19
Chaparhar	1	116,991	121,688	1.04
Khogiani	1	231,000	247,979	1.07
Kot	1	131,769	133,577	1.01
Nazyan	1	33,103	39,168	1.18
Rodat	1	227,450	230,407	1.01
Sherzad	1	165,967	153,569	0.93
Shinwar	1	114,651	149,967	1.31
Spin Ghar*	1	38,687	36,320	0.94
Torghar*	1	12,000	82,018	6.83
Subtotal		**1,192,336**	**1,338,658**	**1.12**
Bati Kot	2	134,362	156,053	1.16
Dih Bala	2	76,297	92,092	1.21
Dur Baba	2	116,009	107,101	0.92
Hisarak	2	53,991	65,878	1.22
Lalpura	2	35,839	44,272	1.24
Momondara	2	75,288	64,749	0.86
Pacher Wa Agam	2	74,090	77,129	1.04
Surkh Rod	2	219,802	209,233	0.95
Subtotal		**785,678**	**816,507**	**1.04**
Behsud	3	84,926	127,312	1.50
Dari Noor	3	96,484	110,966	1.15
Goshta	3	51,596	50,149	0.97
Jalalabad	3	86,642	80,063	0.92
Kama	3	91,538	125,193	1.37
Kuz Kunar	3	84,326	80,998	0.96
Subtotal		**495,512**	**574,681**	**1.16**
Multiple Districts			237,862	NA
Total		**2,501,941**	**2,967,708**	**1.19**

*the TWG provided for 18,415 surplus days without specifying district

The lesson learned is that such allocations are valuable, so long as they are taken as flexible guidelines and not strict limitations. The next section also concerns allocation of resources, but not with a spreadsheet as the planning tool.

Tribal Realities, the "Village Cluster" Solution, and Geographic Coverage

AINP quickly developed a "village cluster" approach that allowed the project to work effectively in multiple villages in a complex environment.

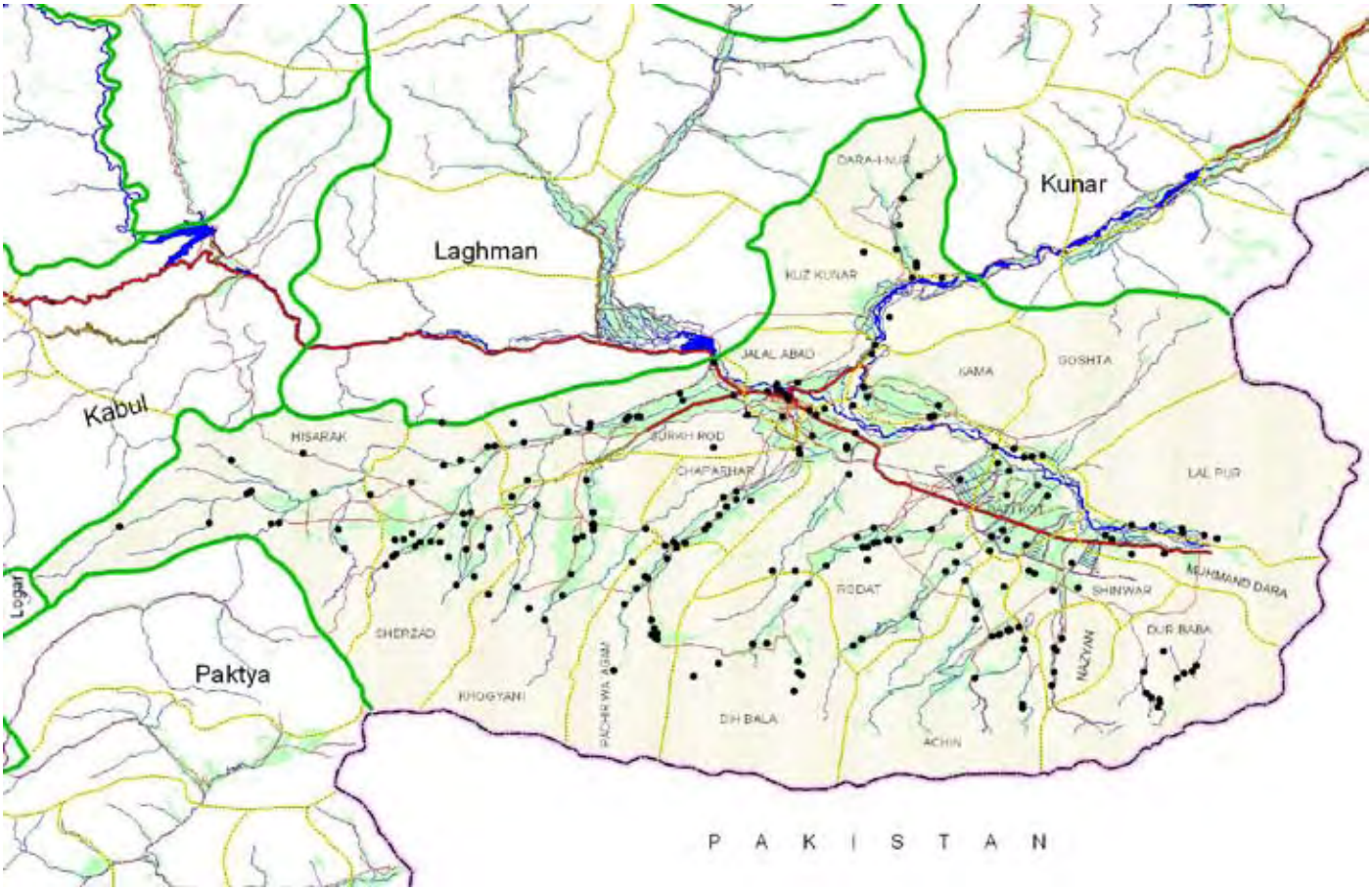
The first AINP projects began in January 2005. Engineers worked in each village as if each were independant. As workers began to clean and rehabilitate irrigation canals, build check dams, and erect flood protection walls, word spread to neighboring villages.

Villages in Nangarhar are not isolated units but are linked to surrounding villages of the same and different subtribes. In one case, where AINP originally planned to work with only one village and, hence, one subtribe, three and eventually five subtribes came to AINP to petition for subprojects. By working with only one subtribe, AINP was effectively generating opposition that would impede the project. Talking to the village *shuras* confirmed that it made economic and ecological sense to expand the activity to cover a longer stretch of the river and to include all five subtribes threatened by flood waters, erosion, and loss of cultivated land.

Some kinds of projects, like cleaning canals and rehabilitating roads, make little sense for single villages. The natural grouping of villages along existing roads or canals means that working with all the villages along a the canal would be a practical necessity -- all affected villages should be incorporated into the subproject.

In other cases, the principle of equity—always a paramount concern—required allocating the work among villages or subtribes. Again and again during the project, villages approached the engineers or project management to ask to be included; then a higher-level shura allocated finite resources among the social units. The allocation might be among villages, or between the part of a district north of a river versus south of the river, or among subtribes, or between residents of a refugee camp and the neighboring villages. When shuras allocated employment among some villages and within the villages they followed the same principal – even if the resources were very limited, the shuras shared them.

From the perspective of AINP, a cluster approach made budgetary sense. Because village subprojects in Nangarhar are relatively small and scattered, the effort to support and supervise multiple, independent subprojects across the province would strain the project budget and increase overhead. DAI has worked in other parts of



Map of Nangarhar with irrigated area in green and AINP subprojects represented by black dots, boundary data courtesy AIMS

Afghanistan where each site engineer can supervise 1,000 or more workers, but in Nangarhar the scattered population means that each engineer can supervise only 600 or even fewer workers. Part of the answer was to work with several villages using the same project template. As long as the technology was simple and labor-intense, workers from the new villages could learn on the job, and the cost of supervision would remain low. (Another part of the answer was to use interns, junior engineers, and local engineers to supervise the work, which will be described later.)

The working definition of "village cluster" arising from this approach is a practical one: it is a set of villages geographically close and appropriate for similar project activities. These villages may be actual neighbors (contiguous settlements) or they may simply fall within the working reach of a single field supervisor. They are similar in having the characteristics that allow the subproject to be executed successfully. A village cluster project uses the same or similar technologies in all villages of the cluster and uses one supervisor for implementation in all the villages.

When the results of the district workshops were mapped, it became clear that the villages that requested a particular type of technology were often clustered in fact because the technology worked in a particular environment. For example, canal rehabilitation would be appropriate only where irrigation canals were feasible, near to rivers.

The village cluster approach worked well. It allowed AINP to expand from employing 1,000 people a day in single-village projects to employing nearly 5,000 people per day a month later. Within that month, the original village projects had been expanded to 11 cluster projects, the smallest encompassing two villages (to be expanded later), the largest involving 10 villages along a single canal. Each engineer was able to attend to many more beneficiaries.

The equity principal had another effect – the geographic dispersal of the subprojects to cover the landscape. Examine the map of AINP subprojects (see Part A of the final report). It looks more like even coverage of the province's irrigated areas than like a random distribution or bunching or clumping. The reason is that district shuras made sure that all of the subtribes of the district eventually got some project activity, and no subtribe could monopolize the project's benefits.

In turn, this resulted in geographic coverage beyond what had been thought possible at the start of the project. As the project began, both national and international staff were reluctant to work in some areas. Due to the workings of the tribal system, by the end of the project the subprojects were active in places where no NGO had worked and, as one of the engineers put it, "no one has worked since the time of the king."

It would be pleasant to claim that all this was the result of astute foresight, but the social dynamic that lead to the relatively even distribution of subprojects over the landscape was not planned. Project management did recognize the pattern early in the project, without being able to claim it as an intentional strategy, because AINP regularly mapped the subproject locations using a GIS.

Village elders were pleased with the degree to which they had been consulted in project decisions; they helped to allocate work among subtribes and villages, thereby building AINP's momentum and achieving coverage that had been unforeseen.

Staffing Strategy

Staffing patterns evolved over the course of AINP to respond to the special features of the project. Cost remained low, but work load and the number of staff increased. When it became clear that the dispersal of villages, agriculture, and poppy cultivation meant that the number of subprojects would rise well beyond initial expectations, and that DAI would be implementing most of those subprojects, then the number of local staff had to rise.

Senior engineers went from three to five (one to help with the new subprojects and one to oversee subcontractor projects), but that was not the main need. Rather, the project needed large numbers of junior engineers on site and the drivers to get them there. The answer was to train and hire interns from the University of Nangarhar as well as to rent local vehicles with their drivers aboard.

Originally, the international staff included a chief of party, head of finance and administration, and chief engineer. The work load was very high, so the project requested a deputy COP and a head of communications.

After the May 11 riots, the number of guards was increased.

Field accountants, the ones who carried wages to the 100 or so projects active at any time, were essential for the success of the project and performed very well.

This staff is large for a project that distributes grants or subcontracts work; for a project that implements most of the field work directly, it is appropriate and sufficient. Costs were low and the project maintained programmatic costs above 70% of the gross budget.

At the start of a project, a budget like this might be daunting. In fact, the number of vehicles and interns grew with the work load and they were not budgeted as "employees," but rather as the cost of transportation

services and subproject costs. When the workload diminished at the end of the projects, the costs were reduced correspondingly.

One lesson learned is that staffing should be appropriate to the task. In past decades, some agricultural projects started with large extension staffs with little work to perform, each with a vehicle. Here, the staffing stayed in tune with the work at hand, and the project purchased no vehicles; this strategy worked well and efficiently. We return to the question of vehicles in the next section.

Administrative Lessons Learned

As might be expected, many administrative matters that would seem commonplace in other settings were a challenge in Nangarhar. Two will be noted here: procurement and car rental.

AINP's procurement procedures were drawn from standard government purchasing practices and the project financial manual. Large purchases required sealed bids from at least three firms which were opened simultaneously, with the contract going to the lowest bidder. At the outset of the project, however, our engineers discovered that the cheapest supplier at times provided lower grade materials or weren't able to meet the delivery schedule that the quick-moving project required. In response AINP got the engineers more directly involved with checking materials and eventually found which local suppliers could be trusted. This allowed for a transparent competitive bidding process, and the merchants still felt a personal responsibility to deliver the correct materials on time. The lesson learned is that engineers, not just administrators, should be involved.

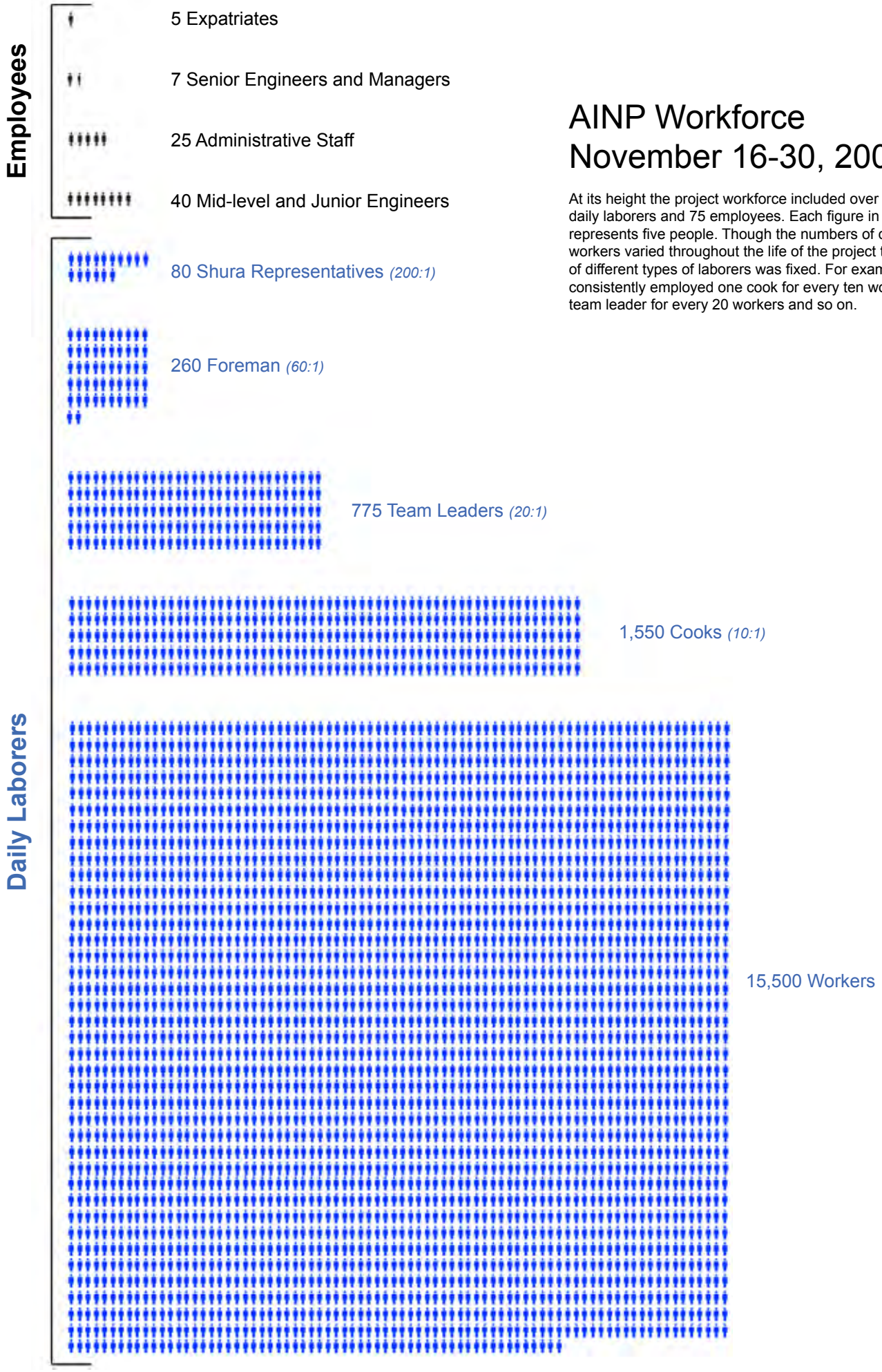
The choice of renting instead of purchasing cars also relied on personal assurances along with written contracts. The practical ability of the judiciary to enforce contracts is not clear. With simultaneous projects being implemented by a staff of 150 throughout Nangarhar, AINP needed a fleet over 50 cars, trucks and SUVs. For a one-year project purchasing that many vehicles, and setting up the mechanic's shop that would be required to service them after their journeys on the province's rough roads, was cost prohibitive. Instead AINP paid between $35-$60 a day to rent a vehicle with a driver, including petrol and any maintenance required. But hiring 50 drivers with their personal vehicles to move project staff around, including international staff, posed a significant potential security risk. AINP's strategy to mitigate that risk was to ask senior provincial government officials and other trusted parties (such as Afghan UN security officials) to recommend drivers and provide a 'letter of guarantee' that the person was interested in assisting the project and its aims. This fit in well with traditional practices of bringing in workers whose integrity can be vouched for by a trusted individual. It also expanded the number of people in Jalalabad with a direct interest in seeing the program be successful and continue.

AINP did check backgrounds of drivers but did not

AINP Junior Engineers

AINP Workforce November 16-30, 2005

At its height the project workforce included over 18,000 daily laborers and 75 employees. Each figure in the graphic represents five people. Though the numbers of daily workers varied throughout the life of the project the ratio of different types of laborers was fixed. For example, AINP consistently employed one cook for every ten workers, one team leader for every 20 workers and so on.



eliminate drivers because they had a relative who had supported the Taliban, had supported the communists or Russians, had served a former "freedom fighter" who had become a "gun lord", or had grown poppy in previous years. In recent decades, nearly everyone who lived in Afghanistan took part in some questionable activity.

Subcontracts vs. Direct Implementation

Of the 260 subprojects implemented under AINP, Relief International implemented 31 subprojects for Employment Generation and five subprojects for Household Income Support. The NGO Rubia implemented one subproject for Household Income Support. DAI directly implemented the balance of the Employment Generation subprojects and no Household Income Support subprojects.

What does this experience show us about implementation mechanisms?

The experience under Household Income Support shows that under some circumstances it is better to work through subcontracts or grantees. DAI did not set out to subcontract all of the work under CLIN03. Rather, DAI intended to develop specialized staff and skills to do some of the CLIN03 work. But in the social atmosphere of Nangarhar Province, those tasks required special networking, outreach, and skills equal to that required to implement the employment generation activities. One the other hand, some institutions, like Relief International and Rubia, already had the networks, staff, and experience to implement CLIN03 activities with women. There would be no delay in getting started, and that was important for AINP. Since CLIN02 was intended to generate 2,375,000 days of labor, and CLIN03 was only intended to generate 125,000 days of training or employment (a goal that RI and Rubia surpassed), it made good sense for DAI to focus on CLIN02. The social capital built up by these experienced organizations paid off.

On the other hand, the experience under Employment Generation shows that sometimes the direct approach is effective. Relief International was an attractive partner because it had already done substantial work in parts of Nangarhar Province. Still, DAI was able to get subprojects started in the field very quickly, faster than the subcontract plans could be developed, negotiated, and approved. Subcontracting did not reduce costs in this case. When RI was working on CLIN02 projects, DAI still had to assign an engineer to supervise the work, and the number of workers that he was overseeing indirectly was about the same as the other senior engineers were overseeing directly.

Another advantage to direct work was the direct link between AINP management and the villager councils and workers, which was considerably stronger than it would have been if DAI had acted only indirectly.

There are local firms, some called "NGOs" that do construction work in Nangarhar. They have no incentive to work using the labor-intense methods that AINP required and they find it difficult to do the sort of small projects in relatively obscure villages that allowed AINP to meet its goals.

There are some NGOs active in the Province, but the budgetary constraints placed on AINP meant that it was difficult for them to fit their overhead and costs in an already tight budget in addition to DAI supervision costs and overhead.

If the AINP projects had required use of more machinery or other specialized inputs, or perhaps if they had required more specialized skills, then subcontractors bringing those capital goods or skills would have been attractive. But that was not the case for the simple work required in this case.

Finally, AINP was focused on generating employment and rehabilitating village-level infrastructure, not on fostering the capacities of NGOs. We do believe that village shuras are better for having participated in AINP subprojects, but that was not the point of the project. If fostering NGOs had been a project goal, then implementation by grants and subcontracts would have been more attractive.

The lesson learned is that direct implementation should complement subcontracting and granting as an implementation mechanism. Sometimes direct implementation is a better deal for the client and beneficiaries, and sometimes the other mechanisms are best. In AINP, conditions favored direct implementation. Current practices by prime contractors (including DAI in other projects) emphasize subcontracting and grants; AINP seems to indicate that direct implementation has a place.

Ensuring Local Involvement with Appropriate Oversight: Roles and Responsibilities

Prominent Role of Shuras in Implementation

Involvement of the traditional village and district shuras to choose and implement subprojects was a notable feature of AINP implementation. As noted earlier, a functioning

tribal and village organization was a prominent feature of Nangarhar society. Several features of project implementation are related to this strategy.

Inclusion from the start. At the very outset, the DAI proposal for work in Nangarhar included asking shuras to nominate or approve each subproject.

Staffing. At different times, most of the AINP staff worked with the shuras. The junior engineers and site engineers lived in the district centers and had most contact, both on the job and after work. This allowed good relations with the shuras. The senior engineers and the chief engineer actively participated in establishing relations with the shuras, in working with them to plan subprojects, and in resolving problems. The accountants worked with the shuras to arrange payments and security. The Monitoring and Evaluation staff helped when there was a problem and met with shura representatives for evaluations. The COP met with shura delegations in the field or in the office.

DAI did not have a group of promoters or outreach staff. AINP engineers served that function, and it worked in part because the subprojects were small and simple. On the other hand, subcontractor Relief International does assign staff with their engineers to work in the villages. Both approaches are valid, and a new project should be guided by its expectations of what the outreach staff would be doing.

Work with traditional shuras. AINP accepted traditional local shuras as they were found because its objectives required immediate start-up. The National Solidarity Program (NSP) works to form or confirm shuras with local elections, as their approach has more overt capacity-building. As with the question of staffing, both approaches are valid and depend on the objectives of a project. AINP would not have succeeded at its primary objective if it has adopted the NSP approach because of the time that NSP takes to work with shuras before implementing subprojects.

In practical terms, the differences were minor. There were shuras formed by the National Solidarity Program in three of the districts of Nangarhar, and where such shuras existed, they participated in choosing subprojects. The NSP shura membership overlaps considerably with that of traditional shuras. AINP worked with shura members to keep or review work records, allocate labor in a participatory manner, focus on technical questions, and otherwise develop skills that enhance governance capacity.

Learning process approach. During implementation, the role of the shuras increased as their contributions became clearer, as they learned about AINP and as AINP learned to work with them. It was a situation that required mutual learning. Sometimes the shuras ideas prevailed, and sometimes AINP's ideas prevailed.

A village shura in discussion with a member of the AINP monitoring and evaluation team

Some of the issues that came up with the shuras were that some thought that AINP should pay people for giving up poppy rather than for working; some thought that part of the cost of the projects should be given to the shura as a fee; and some wanted to add workers who would not work. AINP explained its rules in these matters, and shuras accepted them. Sometimes a nominated project was simply unfeasible (e.g. when rehabilitation of a canal was unfeasible or too big a project), and the village shura usually (but not always) agreed with a different subproject. Some shuras did not want to hire women cooks, or wanted to give the money to widows as charity without work; AINP did not force any shura to accept cooks, and in the end most found that they could work the way that AINP was proposing.

On the other hand, AINP learned that it had to allocate work among villages in an acceptable way and made a virtue of what was a recognition of local power by asking the shuras to do that work (see the discussion of the "cluster" approach). Despite the district workshops that village representatives had attended, when the AINP engineers arrived to plan a subproject in detail, sometimes the shuras did not agree with the project selection of priorities. For example, they may have nominated three types of subproject and were unhappy that the project had selected their lowest priority. In many cases they were right, and AINP tried to adapt.

In the end, AINP was better for recognizing the importance of the shuras, and the shuras did a better job of managing local development because they (generally) accepted AINP rules.

Also part of the learning process approach, AINP developed new tools as it learned about the shuras on the job. For example, the project adopted items like standard agreements, rules for residence in the district centers, and a shura representative on the job.

Standard agreements. One innovation in the initial months of the project was to develop a standard agreement between AINP and the shura. The agreement specified the number of work days to be used in an area, and the elders from contributing villages signed or marked the document, thus eliminating one source of misunderstanding and friction between the project and the villages.

No free residence in the district centers. One stress was that some shura members and maleks offered to provide food and lodging for AINP engineers without payment, following traditional norms of hospitality. However, this would create a conflict of interest, so the project preferred to rent offices in less conspicuous compounds and pay for food.

A shura member on the job. Hiring one member of the shura to be on site and resolve issues at each subproject was very useful.

Political neutrality. Another stress arose during elections for provincial representatives. By September of 2005, AINP was well known throughout the province, and some candidates wanted to address workers on the job. AINP maintained neutrality and did not allow assemblies on the job sites. During the campaign, one candidate requested that AINP stop renting an office from another because the other candidate was trying to get credit for AINP work. AINP prepared to accede to this request, but then the whole shura met and advised the project that it should not move out, as this would negatively affect the owner of the house. The project continued at the house, but no solution was entirely satisfactory.

Shuras, maleks and commanders. There were a few cases in which a village headman (malek), a commander, or other individual was said to have tried to manipulate a subproject. Influential people can be members of a council directly or though related individuals. Indeed, an advantage of working with shuras was that such powerful individuals were involved, directly or indirectly, and thus they also agreed to the subproject selection and rules. At the same time, their individual power and prestige is curbed by the consensus-building in the shura meeting. In practical terms, the threat of interference by powerful individuals did not stop subprojects.

Limits on the efficacy of shuras. Shuras were a great help to AINP in security matters, but they had limits. AINP took seriously the offer of the shuras to provide security for staff after the May 11 riots. But two specific matters were beyond the capacity or willingness of the shuras. After AINP was robbed in Khogiani district, the project asked the shura to retrieve all or part of the funds that had been taken, no questions asked. Despite the discussions held, there was no progress on the case. After a bomb went off at an RI worksite, the shuras professed ignorance of the issues. Shura involvement was certainly beneficial for AINP, but there were limits on what the shuras could do.

Another limitation of shura involvement is the lack of women on the traditional shuras. To what may seem a surprising degree, the shuras recommend actions of interest to women. In district shuras at the start of the project and others near the end, village representatives frequently asked for girls' schools or schools for both girls and boys, with separate classrooms, They also asked for clinics, and the risks of childbirth were a primary motivation. Moreover, AINP's actions with women, done in ways that showed respect for local custom, did not cause adverse reactions. Still, the traditional shuras do not include women, and they operate within the cultural limitations placed on women's roles.

Another limitation was mentioned in the earlier discussion of projects nominated by shuras. Villagers have village

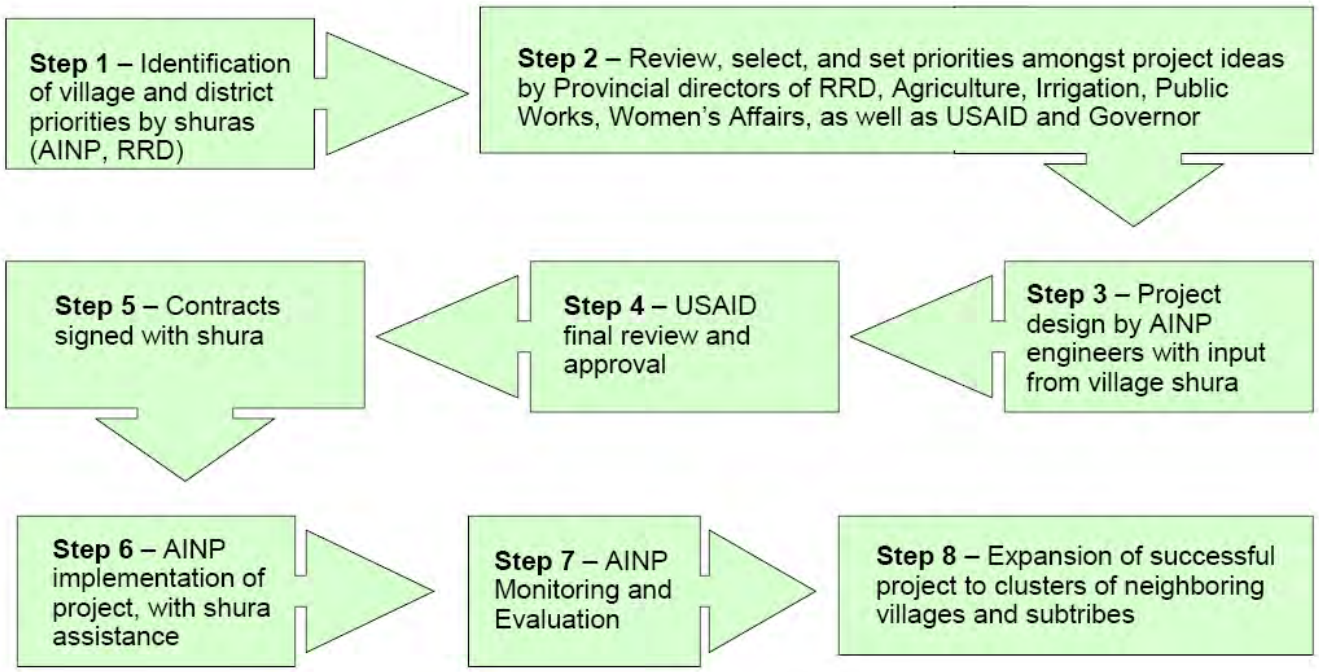
concerns. They should and do put their local interests first. Province-wide development requires that perspective as well as a broader, more technical perspective.

Under AINP, shuras showed that they could handle quite complex tasks, though they were not asked ot manage funds with accounting. NSP is working to increase that capacity to some degree. For now, most of the population is not literate and that limits the capacity of the shuras to manage projects.

Lessons learned. Once a project has gained the trust of shuras, and once they understand the tasks involved, shuras were excellent partners for local development, a role that may be replicated elsewhere. They generally accepted the constraints under which AINP worked. For now, donors should involve shuras in tasks that they can handle and not ask shuras to do what they are unprepared to do.

The specific mechanisms used by AINP – participatory workshops, inclusion of traditional shuras in decisions complemented by more technical perspectives, response to shura initiatives, rapid delivery of benefits to gain trust, hiring a shura representative on the implementation team, asking the shuras to resolve real problems, insistence on good governance, etc. – are replicable by other projects, depending on their objectives.

The steps for working with the shuras is easily represented by a graphic:



Security Issues

Security is an issue for any project in Afghanistan. Compared with other regions, the eastern region of the country is less dangerous than the south, and more dangerous than the north. There were sufficient incidents during the project – explosions, robbery, threats -- to confirm the risk, but no casualties and modest financial loss.

Financial Procedures in a Risky Environment

Perhaps the trickiest part of implementing AINP was securely paying thousands of laborers in the field. At the outset, many solutions were considered for payments, including distributing the money through checks, vouchers or via local

government officials.Nangarhar, however, boasted only two functioning banks, both in Jalalabad. Meanwhile, traveling to Jalalabad with a functioning car could take six hours from some subproject sites. Even material vendors often refused to accept checks. So checks or vouches weren't feasible. And though the project relied on local government officials for subproject selection and oversight, routing millions of dollars through their networks would have been nearly impossible to trace and so was likely to result in some degree of graft. That left direct payments to laborers by AINP accountants, or the RI equivalents.

At its height AINP had 19,000 laborers on its payroll located at 100 different project sites across Nangarhar. Six full-time field accountants made payments directly to workers on behalf of the project, physically moving on average over $1 million a month divided into increments of about $20,000 per trip.

The main security strategy for making payments was maintaining secrecy on when the payments would occur. Workers were paid twice a month and given five day windows about when each payment might occur. The accountants were randomly rotated to different project sites and didn't know where they were headed until the day the payment was being made. Though in general the 50+ vehicle pool on the project was randomly assigned, the field accountants were the only ones with a reserved team of specially selected drivers who had received extended background checks.

AINP used a deliberately low profile in all of its operations, and field payments were no exception. Local village vehicles in Nangarhar usually pick up children and the elderly to give them a ride to their destination, and our field accountants would often follow the same practice, thereby looking to an outside observer like they lived in the area.

Local shura members were always consulted as to the best security strategies to implement. Sometimes these members volunteered to be picked up by the accountants to ride with them and deliver an unmistakable message: this project has the backing of the local authorities.

Finally, in areas that were known for robberies, or experiencing unusual security warnings AINP used private money lenders who operate hawalas to move the money from Jalalabad to district centers.

Thanks to these precautions AINP only suffered one robbery of $14,000 in the Khogiani district, amounting to one-tenth of one percent of all the funds transferred by the field accountants. RI also suffered one robbery of about $10,000.

An AINP field accountant making payments

Another interesting element was the program's effort to pay wages in Afghanis as opposed to US dollars or the dominant currency in Nangarhar currency, Pakistani Rupees. Many of the workers in outlying villages had never used Afghanis before and had resisted accepting payment in the currency for fear it wouldn't be recognized as a valid form of payment. But when AINP suddenly introduced a large influx of the currency into the communities' shops, traders were forced to accept the currency and begin dealing in it.

May 11th Riots and Ramifications

On May 11, 2005, there were demonstrations in Jalalabad ostensibly protesting disrespect for the Koran at the prison located on Guantanamo Bay. Bands of demonstrators burned the offices of several NGOs, UN compounds, and the governor's office. The police did not control what became a mob and the demonstrators showed knowledge of the location of the offices of international institutions, which they proceeded to burn. Later, guards fired on mobs. From Jalalabad, news traveled to the districts and mobs formed there; as they marched towards Jalalabad, police fired on some groups.

The office of AINP subcontractor Relief International was burned. The DAI office was threatened, but not attacked.

Several other factors make security a concern for AINP. Although armed conflict has not stopped in the eastern region of Afghanistan, AINP national and international employees have been stationed in Jalalabad for the entire project period. Most (85%) of the work has been done by DAI staff via direct implementation; this has required posting national staff in the districts during the work week, where they are exposed to some risk; and international staff do travel throughout the province (see map of subproject sites). In addition, the project has had to move cash to the project sites.

The security threats to AINP staff were varied and from several actors. Anti-government elements, criminal elements, backlash against Coalition activity such as destruction of heroin laboratories, reaction to poppy eradication, and tribal/villager/family disputes all contribute to an insecure operating environment for AINP staff and subprojects.

Overt acts against project staff included burning the office of subcontractor Relief International during the May 11 riot, robbery of one RI payroll, robbery of one DAI payroll, an improvised explosive device at an RI work site (damage to one car, no casualties), and a bomb that exploded at a DAI work site (the target is not known; possibly the bomber accidentally set off the explosive). There were several cases when a higher-profile vehicle

Part of the Relief International offices burned in the May 11th riots

was targeted soon after a low-profile project vehicle had passed.

Other security-related risks were not targeted at the project; such risks included finding weapons and explosives hidden in karezes that the project was cleaning, finding unexploded ordinance in canals that were being cleaned, and inter-village conflicts over land or resources.

AINP designed procedures that allowed it to continue operations in Nangarhar without interruption, and to complete all of its subprojects with only short interruptions.

Risk Assessment

AINP began by defining the level of risk within districts related to both expatriates and nationals using simple categories: low, medium, high, and extremely high risk. The project hired a local security coordinator.

The Security Coordinator and the COP assessed the districts. Most of the information was from the AINP staff living in the field during the work week and other local contacts—such as district governors, chiefs of police, and district or local shuras. The security coordinator and COP also took into account information from the United Nations (UN) and the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO). Coalition Forces provided a general briefing, assessed the DAI security arrangements, and provided a briefing before the September elections.

The principal use of the DAI risk assessments was to permit or delay travel to the project sites for site engineers, field accountants, and expatriates. They also supported the site engineers to request assistance from the local shuras or from district authorities.

Relatively Low Profile in the Field

Compared to some agencies, AINP kept a relatively low profile in the field. Within the context of Nangarhar, that meant working as follows:

- Use older rental vehicles with no exterior marking or antennas; for even lower profile, use four-wheel-drive pick-up trucks or local taxis
- No Codan antennas on vehicles; no external mark of affiliation on the vehicles
- Expatriates wear local dress outside of Jalalabad
- In high-risk districts, expatriates make essential journeys only, guards dress down while in the vehicle; no open display of weapons
- Security coordination with the local government authorities or shuras, but with short notice
- Travel with guides who know the area, including alternate routes
- Return travel by a different route, where possible
- Limit knowledge of travel plans to fewest individuals and last moment

"Relatively low-profile" does not mean secrecy. AINP staff never attempted to conceal that the funding of the project was from USAID and the people of the United States, and indeed put up signs to that effect at the project sites. Nor did staff try to travel to the sites without informing local shuras and, usually, district authorities; on the contrary, when at risk we requested that the shuras and maleks invite us to come and provide unarmed escorts. In other contexts, like Iraq, USAID and DAI do not put up signs; that was not necessary in Nangarhar.

Moderate Profile in the Office and Guesthouses

The office and guesthouses of DAI are not low profile, but they are not as high-profile as a UN compound, for example.

The offices are surrounded by walls (as are most houses in Jalalabad), have unarmed "inside" guards and armed "outside" guards, and have taken other steps to protect staff.

Local and expatriate staff work together in the DAI office and the local gossip network ensures that privacy is limited, even in the guest house. A reasonable accommodation to local custom is prudent, while complete compliance with local custom is not possible or necessary.

AINP required:

- Modest dress and behavior in public at all times with reasonable accommodation to local customs
- Avoidance of disputes on politics and religion.

Acceptance Strategy

Local authorities in Nangarhar include the village leaders (or maleks), village council (or shura), the irrigation water master (or mirab), and religious authorities (or mullah). At the district level, there are tribal leaders and government authorities. Failure to include the range of authorities can lead to resentments and risk. Gaining acceptance from these notables is a safety measure.

Almost all AINP projects were identified by assemblies of elders in the district centers. The elders came from most of the villages of the district to such assemblies. When it was time to plan the specific village-level work, AINP engineers worked with the village elders. Every village-

level project has a contract signed by the elders and the engineers specifying how AINP will work in the village. At the district center, AINP engineers met with government authorities. Staff also asked for assistance from tribal elders in case of intractable disputes between villages.

Whenever a dispute arose about the alignment of a road or allocation of employment among villages, the shuras would be involved. For labor allocation, they discussed the matter at some length and decided on an equitable distribution of employment. When the matter involved how to align a road or where to put flood protection walls, the project staff participated in the debates.

There were some difficult decisions, as when a powerful malek wanted a road to be diverted to his home, but in the end, resolution was possible on almost all projects. In one case, AINP abandoned a subproject when two sub-tribes could not agree on how to proceed while threatening violence. Moreover, not every one was pleased about all aspects of the project, at least when it began. In general, this system worked well.

Working with local authorities, gaining their consent, making room for their role in important issues up to and including continuation of activities, consulting with them on security issues, and adapting to local customs to the extent possible constituted the “acceptance strategy.” In this case, it worked well.

Medium Profile Activities – Office Protection

The Jalalbad office compound is not low profile because it has armed guards visible from the street, limited access, and razor wire on the walls. UN offices are more conspicuous, and some NGOs are considerably less conspicuous.

With a large staff and fleet of rental cars to take them to all of the districts of the province, a truly low-profile approach did not seem feasible. AINP decided on this level of security investments early in the project after several emails and phone calls threatened the expatriates and a letter was circulated to mosques about the foreigners.

Travel Clearance

Every week, the AINP security coordinator clears departure from the Jalalabad office to each of the districts of the Province. On many weeks, missions are delayed because there has been trouble in a district: families or villages are fighting, there is a raid on a heroin lab going on, someone has set off a roadside bomb, etc. The staff stay in Jalalabad until AINP receives word that a district is calm, usually only a matter of hours, but sometimes for several days.

Once cleared for a district, the engineers would stay out until the following Wednesday. The field accountants were expected back before dark.

AINP keeping a low profile: engineers and an expat visit a village to discuss there needs

Training

UNMACA was enormously helpful during AINP by removing unexploded ordinance. They also trained AINP workers in what to do when they encountered metallic objects while digging in the city. The Nangarhar Hospital sent staff to train AINP workers on hygiene while they were cleaning the city drainage canals.

Staff from an international security firm, DAI's corporate security expert, and a locally-hired former policeman trained local guards. The experts also held training events for international and national staff.

Refuge, Evacuation, and Continuity

After the May riots, expatriate staff took refuge on the Provincial Reconstruction Team base with the US Army Reserve, and local staff went home. Thereafter one expatriate went to Kabul for a week. The local subprojects never stopped. On the day of the riots, the workers decided to keep working rather than join what had become by then riots. Essential AINP local staff came back to work the next day and expatriates came to the office or met with local staff at the PRT.

After a week, DAI asked the governor to provide additional security for the project, and he decided that the decision would have to be made by the leaders of the province. He and DAI invited the elders of all of the districts of the province to meet in a wedding banquet hall in Jalalabad. 350 elders and 150 others came to the meeting. The governor spoke for the project and the AINP COP presented the specifics of the projects implemented so far – by May, the project was already working at full speed. In the end, the elders decided that they wanted the project to continue and provided letters of invitation and security for each district.

At that stage, the DAI offices were still relatively low-profile. But since the mob had targeted and burned UN and NGO offices, including the RI office, and had approached the DAI office, it was clear that low-profile was not a fully adequate strategy. DAI thereafter implemented measures recommended by its security appraisals, which gave it a moderate profile.

One reason why AINP could maintain operations was the organization of its subprojects – they were almost self-organizing, as shown in the next section.

Recovery from Shock: Robust, Self-organizing Activities

Why was it possible to keep the AINP activities going in the field after the May 11 riot, when site engineers and expatriates were confined to Jalalabad? Largely it was because once in motion the subprojects almost organized themselves.

- Village-level projects were designed to be technically simple. Local foremen and local engineers were able to oversee implementation for a few weeks without problem.

- Work was clear and divided into manageable tasks. While a project might employ hundreds of people, most of the work was divided among teams of 20 workers, each with a leader and each able to work by itself. There was division of labor – crews to do heavy labor, weave the gabion wire boxes, do masonry, etc. – but the overall scheme was not complex.

- Supplies and equipment were on hand. Cement and gabion wire, for example, were kept in local compounds. In the cases where machinery was required, the most frequently used equipment was locally-owned and operated tractors, with little reliance on heavy equipment.

- Many local people – team leaders, foremen, local engineers – were recruited to be on the staff and to handle all of the administrative tasks required for project management. Since the work was done by direct implementation, the presence of Jalalabad-based subcontractors was not needed.

- Local authorities were behind the projects and capable of undertaking many management functions, including resolving problems. The village shura participated in design and signed an agreement about its responsibilities at the start of the work.

- Emergency payment procedures were ready so that workers could receive payment without exposing AINP staff to high risk. There were surprisingly few cases where this procedure led to issues.

- Diversion of resources was difficult. Payment procedures were clear to workers and local authorities, so that they knew how much to expect; this made it hard to mismanage money. The beneficiaries of the works were the workers themselves; this reduced incentives to divert materials. Because they were simple, the correct implementation of works was visible to all.

- Risk of technical mistakes was low. If there was a minor deviation in execution of a canal or road rehabilitation, it would have little or no consequence; this would not be the case for investments like dams, tunnels, or complex buildings.

AINP provided substantial oversight for local activities. At the same time, the activities were quite robust. This

sounds contradictory, but it was not because of the characteristics of the activities presented here. The robust, nearly self-organizing features of AINP work benefited the project and would be useful of some, but not all, other projects.

Social Inclusion

Working with Women

AINP implemented six projects targeted at helping women augment their family's income through household activities. In sum they amounted to 285,000 training days for women, for which they were paid over $600,000 in wages and materials.

Programs specifically designed for women's household income generation were implemented by two subcontractors: Rubia and Relief International (RI). RI took the bulk of the work, while Rubia implemented a specific program that expanded their existing program to teach women how to embroider goods for export to US markets.

CLIN 3-1: Dara-i-Noor Women's Handicraft Project

In this project, 200 women were provided with the materials and skills via training to fulfill employment objectives as part time home based artisans. Through the life of the project they had the opportunity to practice and apply the skills that they learned in their two week training period. Their skills were refined through the duration of the project. Many of these women will be able to continue providing handicrafts for Rubia to export, or to sell in the Afghan markets that target foreigners. This project ran from 15 April to 15 September in one village in Dari Nur. Both the women and community are eager for another project to train more women in this skill, as they can see the potential income benefit. The monitoring for this program largely relied on visits from DAI staff, and from an international expert, Rachel Lehr, who works with Rubia in the US. The success of this program derives from the fact that it worked within the cultural context of the area, and allowed the women to work from their homes on the activity. This area is very conservative, and women are rarely allowed to go out of the house – even to interact with each other. This program laid the groundwork for women's networks and empowerment that has proved acceptable to all villagers.

A woman's embroidered signature

CLIN 3-2: Small Scale Agricultural Processing

150 women were trained in small scale agricultural processing over a period of close to three months (72 planned days of activities/5,400 learning days) at seven centers in three districts (Surkh Rod, Khogyani and Behsud). The women receive five hours of daily instruction in jam making, pickling and preserve making and a daily wage of 75 Afghanis (approx. $1.50) for participating in the training. Activities under this project started in the first week of April 2005 and ended on June 30, 2005. Regular monitoring for quality control and to ensure regular attendance was ongoing throughout the project.

Women learned hygienic methods for preserving and processing various vegetables and fruits. This will improve their household health, as they learn how to keep their food and utensils clean, in addition to providing them with an opportunity to earn income for their families.

CLIN 3-3: Handicraft Training

188 women were trained in handicraft skills-embroidery and beading over a period of 6 months (156 planned days of activities/29,328 learning days). They receive three hours of daily instruction and a wage of 75 Afghanis (approx. $1.50). Classes are held in three districts (Jalalabad City, Behsud and Surkh Rod) at 13 centers. Activities under this project started on April 1, 2005 and ended on September 30, 2005. Regular monitoring for quality control and to ensure regular attendance was ongoing.

Women trained in beading and embroidery have a high-income earning potential. Beading and traditional dresses can be sold for up to five times the cost of the materials. Depending on the skill and experience of the women, she can make 8-10 beaded shirts in a month, greatly supplementing the

households income.

CLIN 3-4: Tailoring for Disabled Women

97 disabled women in Jalalabad City were trained in tailoring for a period of six months (156 planned days of activities/15,132 learning days). They receive five hours of daily instruction and a wage of 75 Afghanis (approx. $1.50). The project is implemented through a local NGO- Afghan Mother & Child Assistance Organization (AMCAO) in Jalalabad City. Activities under this projected started on April 1, 2005 and ended on September 30, 2005. Regular monitoring for quality control and to ensure regular attendance was ongoing.

Working with the disabled in Nangarhar has a double impact for the women – not only do they learn the basic skills of tailoring, but they regain some confidence in their ability to continue contributing to their family life despite their disability. The women involved are very motivated to learn a skill that will help them contribute to the family income, as they are too often seen as only a drain on the family's limited resources.

CLIN 3-5: Training of Trainers in Agricultural Skills

126 instructors (teachers of literacy/numeracy, health, peace and civic education) received training in four small scale agricultural skills activities (bee keeping, poultry farms, kitchen gardens and home-based dairy production) from Master Trainers who were trained in these skills. Trainees receive five hours of practical and field training daily over a period of 12 days and a wage of 75 Afghanis (approx. $1.50). Trainings are currently being held in Rodat, Kot, Chaparhor, Sherzad, Khogyani and Jalalabad City (for women from Goshta, Kama, Kuz Kunar, Behsud and Surkh Rod). Activities under this project started on June 21, 2005 and ended on August 31, 2005 (84 planned days of activities/10,584 learning days). This project is directly linked to the CLIN 3-6: Training of Nangarhar Women in Agricultural Skills project.

Relief International and DAI hope to continue to draw on these women as we continue with these types of activities under ALP/E. They will form part of a core group of women who can earn their income form sharing their knowledge with other women. We hope that some of them will be able to train women as trainers in Laghman and Kunar as well.

CLIN 3-6: Training of Nangarhar Women in Agricultural Skills

3000 women in 13 districts to received training from the 126 trainers trained in CLIN 3-5 in the four small scale agricultural activities. Women in the aforementioned districts were selected to receive training in collaboration with the local shuras and the Director of Women's Affairs. Along with training in the four agricultural skills activities the women also received 15 days training in business and marketing skills and micro-finance. At the conclusion of this training, women who are committed to starting a home based or small-scale business were evaluated, their family support (men) assessed, submitted a business proposal and received an activity kit (e.g. poultry farm-chickens, incubator, feed, etc) and possibly a micro-credit loan. They will receive continued support to follow up on sustainability and success, through ALP/E assistance.

This program is the most comprehensive of the vocational training programs, and includes the lessons learned from the other activities. The inclusion of business training is a key component that will allow these women to start and run their own businesses.

Lessons Learned on the Women's Projects

Working with women to provide them with income-generating opportunities in Nangarhar is extremely challenging for a number of reasons. Women are typically very poorly educated, with illiteracy rates reaching over 90% in some areas. Their husbands and other family members are often resistant to women engaging in income-generating activities. Women do not have the freedom to work outside their home to buy materials for production, to sell the finished goods, or to network with other businesses. They often bear a heavy childcare burden that makes it difficult for them to work for monetary income, even inside their home, in addition to various other duties. Basically, at every entry and exit point to working with women, there is a stumbling block, if not an outright wall.

Those women that are educated often have a difficult time working outside their homes. Special consideration to working and eating space must be given to any woman working in the office, as she will not be able to integrate fully with the rest of the staff – both for her own comfort and reputation and for that of the male staff. Family problems can affect a woman's ability to work. One of the most difficult aspects of trying to hire a woman is trying to find a woman who speaks English well, and is also able to travel freely. Younger women require a chaperone to travel, which inhibits their mobility, while the older women often struggle with English.

Despite these, and other difficulties, DAI was able to work through our implementing partners to implement and monitor the program, with very positive results. Having a female member of the international staff was key to working on these projects, as she was more readily able to get out to monitor projects and to participate in

program planning with the Director of Women's Affairs. The grant to Rubia allowed them to greatly expand and improve their training program, reaching out to women in Dari Nur. They had previously attempted to work with the women in the province but had not achieved the level of quality required to get pieces acceptable for sale. This grant allowed them to expand their monitoring of the women during their training period and during the production period, which resulted in a much higher quality of output – almost 70% of the items produced are acceptable for sale. Women had an opportunity to form networks with other women that Rubia and DAI will be able to tap into for future programs. The work allowed the women to interact with each other without disrupting traditional cultural norms. The community was very supportive of the project, and is keen for a follow-up project to reach out to more women in the community.

The program was a success in term of the output and opportunities provided to the women in Dari Nur. The main issues with the grant related to the administrative and financial management of the program. There was a lack of capacity for financial management that made it difficult for tracking the disbursements of the grant. Although we anticipated this problem, and intended to provide direct accounting support directly to Rubia, the administrative and accounting staff of AINP had to provide assistance to the NGO directly. In other projects, DAI has been able to find local people with NGO experience to provide this kind of technical assistance without burdening the project staff, but no suitable candidates were found in this case. In the future, a project with more grantees will have to find such support consultants. Rubia will need such assistance, especially if they want to grow into more of a business.

The Rubia grant had clear outputs for delivery of actual goods to the NGO. The requirement of AINP to record labor days required an estimate of the days used to make the items delivered. As each woman works at her own speed, and according to time availability, so the process was approximate. A simplified process for this would have eased the burden of record-keeping for Rubia.

Relief International implemented five programs targeting women. The first three projects capitalized on programs that they had been running under CRALS and their BPRM project. This facilitated selection of candidates, villages, and activities. The women involved in the vocational training were those who had already received some literacy training through other RI programs. Thus AINP had an easy entrée to work with these women that would have otherwise taken much longer to develop. The community support had already been secured for the literacy training, so it was very easy to expand this to vocational training.

The main project, reaching almost 3,000 women per day, took some more time to get off the ground. The program first had to do a training of trainers in multiple districts to create a network that was able to reach out to the women who were scattered among 79 villages. For this program, the women were selected by working with the Director of Women's Affairs to identify new areas, and according to areas where RI was already working. The women were trained in four agricultural activities: kitchen gardens, bee-keeping, home-based dairy production, and poultry farming. While each woman was trained in each of the activities, the most likely activity that women could continue after the project was the kitchen gardens, as that only requires some land from their compound, while the others require more capital investment. The project supplied each woman with a starter kit to establish her own kitchen garden. The produce from these gardens will contribute to family consumption and nutritional welfare, and if there is any extra produce, it can be sold in the market.

The presence of a dedicated international staff member on RI's staff to spearhead this project was vital to the successful implementation. For CLIN3-6 the logistical arrangements required skilled organization and management, which had not been so essential on the earlier, smaller projects. With training on-going in 79 villages, a system for managing the monitoring, payment and material disbursement had to be developed in order to make sure that the limited staff would be able to make sure that the program was progressing as planned. Due to this close monitoring, problems were identified and addressed early, without causing too much disruption to the programming. Development of a detailed ME system may cause a short delay at the start, but it was worth the effort.

AINP was not be operational long enough to do long-term monitoring on the impact of these programs on women's lives, but anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some of the women are using their newly developed skills to earn additional income for their households:

- one widow at Shekh Mesri refugee camp used her wage to purchase goats that she raises to sell

- one woman purchased a sewing machines which she uses to sew clothes for their families and sell to other women
- one disabled woman joined with other women to purchase a sewing machine and materials, they are already selling products
- mothers reported they use the income from AINP activities to purchase badly needed medicines

Refugees, Returnees

Although AINP's principal objective was to provide alternative income to people who would otherwise be working on poppy cultivation, it had other goals to assist refugees and "returnees" – mostly people returned to Nangarhar Province from Peshawar in Pakistan. After decades of war and displacement, compounded by drought, people have been coming back to Nangarhar in large numbers. There are four refugee or returnee camps in Nangarhar, and AINP worked with residents from all of them. Overall, more than 40% of AINP beneficiaries were returnees or residents in camps.

A good example of AINP's work with refugees was its canal work on Hada Farms with residents of the Sheikh Misri camp. After USAID and PRT staff visited the camp, and gained concurrence of the governor of Nangarhar, AINP was tasked with finding short-term employment opportunities for camp residents on a priority basis.

Sheikh Misri Camp is on the outskirts of Jalalabad on a government farm. Tents were old and most people lacked funds to buy firewood to keep warm, so there were deaths the winter before AINP's work. Although the camp had received help from several agencies (PRT, UNHCR), people lacked sufficient food and there was no source of clean water, with most people unemployed. Since the Governor of Nangarhar offered to find land for the residents of Sheikh Misri and wanted to move them off the site, no permanent improvements were permitted.

AINP engineers surveyed potential projects that would provide income. The best option was to rehabilitate the irrigation infrastructure on the government farm. AINP did an emergency expansion of a canal-cleaning project and work began. Six work crews of 20 people each employed only about 10% of the workers available, so the jobs were rotated by the camp shura.

Other work with residents of camps included road repair, olive pruning and harvest on a government farm, and karez rehabilitation in a neighboring village. The lesson learned is that labor-intensive projects are a way to get fast assistance to this vulnerable population.

Beneficiary Characteristics

AINP did a survey of its workers to find out who in the population project monies were most directly benefiting.

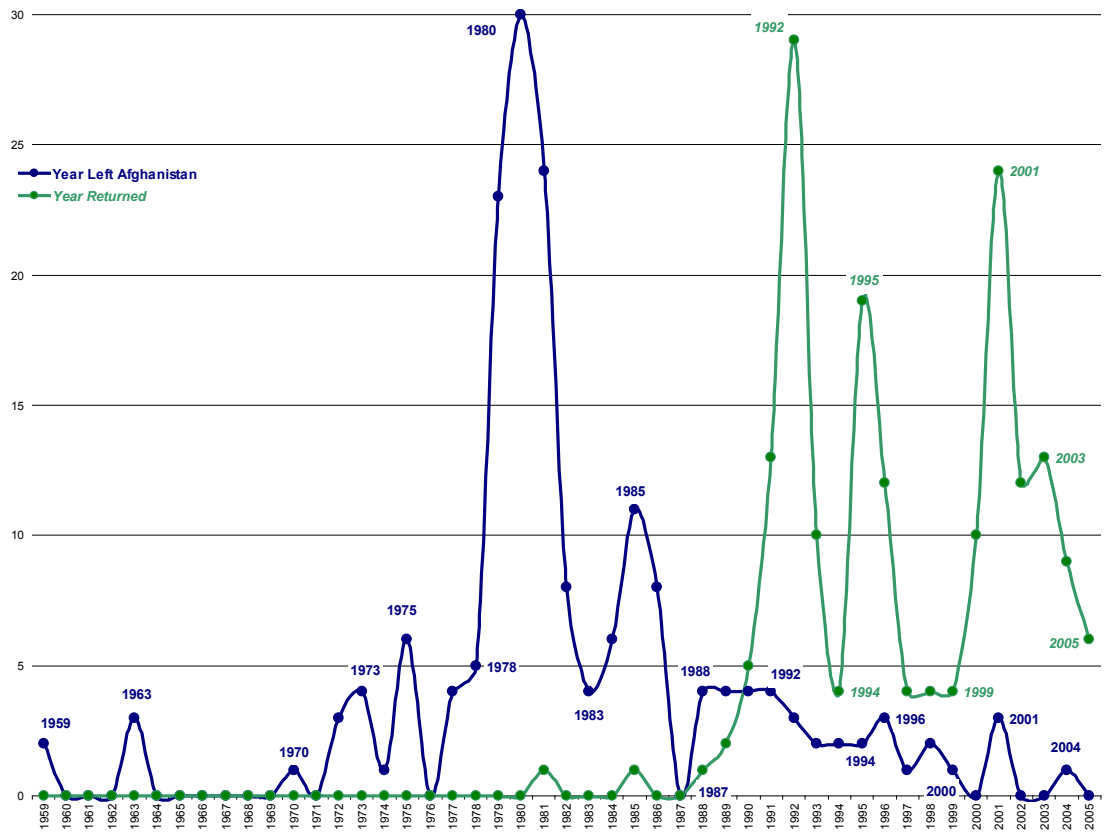
Returnees living in the Sheikh Misri camp work to rehabilitate an irrigation canal

All those surveyed were working on infrastructure projects. The average AINP worker was 30 years old and had 3.6 children. He had grown poppy in the past but had recently stopped (80%). He almost always spoke Pashto (95%) and possibly Dari (31%). If he lived in the hills he spoke Pashaee as well (13%). He was most probably poor, because he used the funds he earned on the project almost exclusively for food.

How did you spend money earned on AINP?
(unprompted, multiple answers permissible)

Food	93%
Children's Education	9%
Housing	6%
Wedding	5%
Farm Equipment	3%
Transportation	2%
Savings	1%
Religious Expenses	1%

He probably fled Afghanistan for Pakistan (82%) and did so during the Russian invasion between 1979–1986. He returned either just before the Taliban took power in 1992–1995, or just after in 2001 (see chart). The average AINP laborer spent just under half of his life (44%) as a refugee.



The worker was probably one of two people in his household working on the project (1.9 members of each household per subproject), but was laboring alongside many of his relatives from his extended family compound (6 members were reported on average). He confirmed that he had received all the money owed to him (95%) and had not been approached for a kick back by any local officials or project employees (99%). He most probably knew that the monies he was receiving came from USAID or the American people (70%).

Who provided money for your wages?
(unprompted, only one answer accepted)

USAID/people of America	70%
Contractor (DAI)	10%
Don't Know	10%
Government of Afghanistan	7%
Name of specific AINP employee	3%

Interestingly, for a rural farmer in one of the most isolated locales on Earth, he was almost sure to know the names and positions of both President Karzai (96%) and President Bush (94%).

Issues and Critiques

Administrative costs

Pick up any newspaper discussing foreign aid programs today and it seems they take for granted that the programs always have bloated budgets going to contractors and expatriate salaries with relatively little left to spend on the intended beneficiaries.

AINP was required to use 70% of it's total budget on labor, materials, and other "programmatic costs." AINP used 73% for programmatic costs. Of the remaining 27%, part was used for payments into the local economy for Afghan staff and local administration. In all, about 80% of AINP funds benefited Afghans directly (see chart)

Shura Perspectives

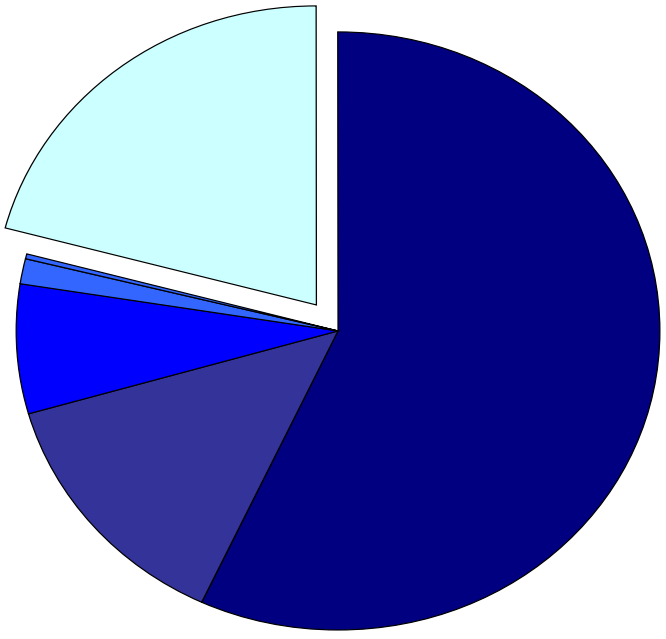
Shuras of villages or occasionally districts played an important role in AINP implementation. That role was formalized in several contexts. The first was the nomination of subproject ideas at the start of the project. The second was the formal contract signed by the shura and the project for subproject implementation. A third was the extraordinary council after the May 11 riot when 350 elders from all districts across the province invited AINP to continue its activities.

Informally, shura members often voiced concerns. They frequently spoke of their desire for more work in their villages. Internal rivalries and critiques of other shura members were not uncommon. They do want additional works and some larger works.

A sample of about a quarter of projects had a formal interview about the project. The first review of the formal shura evaluations was done in June 2005. AINP summarized the mid-term evaluations of its subprojects based on information from 52 active subprojects. The second review of shura evaluations was done in January 2006, based on final reports from 60 projects.

To do the interviews, the staff from the AINP Monitoring and Evaluation Unit visited one or more villages for each

AINP Cost Breakdown



Direct Benefit to the Afghan People: 80%

- Wages Paid Directly to Daily Laborers and Trainees - 57%
- Locally procured project materials - 14%
- Afghan Staff Salaries - 7%
- Local Admin Costs - 2%
- Security* - >1%

International Support: 20%

- Expat Salaries, International Travel, International Procurement, Home Office Support and Misc. Contractor Costs - 20%

*Security funds are considered of direct benefit to the Afghan people because they consist of salaries for local guards and locally procured materials.

subproject to interview those shura members who were available.

a) Shura members participation in implementation:

All subprojects have shura approval, but not all shura members participate in each aspect of the subproject. The mid-term review showed that between half and two-thirds of the shura members interviewed said that they had participated in different aspects of the projects implementation: help to select the project (54% of mid-term evaluations), help select exact site for the project (66% of mid-term evaluations), provide a representative during implementation (43% of mid-term evaluations), choose workers (67% of mid-term evaluations), resolve problems during implementation (48% of mid-term evaluations), or otherwise participate in implementation (2% of mid-term evaluations),

These results for individual participation are quite high. AINP engineers consult with shuras before all subprojects, as shown by signed agreements in each project file. Not all shura members have to attend or agree with the results. Other projects may want to insist that all shura members participate in all aspects of the subproject, and alternative approach that increases participation at the cost of more effort by shura members and possible delays.

b) Distribution of work among social groups (decision about who works on the project):

The shura members report that the local villages have been providing labor for the subprojects, as intended (97% of mid-term evaluations). Poor people have participated in most projects (69% of mid-term evaluations). People are satisfied with the way that employment is distributed (87%).

c) Evaluation of the progress so far: Are people satisfied with the work?

There is clear consensus that the shura members support the progress of the work. They are satisfied with the work done so far (97% of mid-term evaluations), with the supervision by the AINP staff (95% of mid-term evaluations); and by the solution of problems as they come up (90% of mid-term evaluations). In a minority of cases, (less than 10%), there were complaints about the quality of the work, insufficient consultation with people, and failure to resolve issues.

d) Knowledge of source of funding: Do people know the people of the USA are funding the project?

In the mid-term interviews, most, but not all, of the shura members said that they did know that the funding was from the people of the US (77% of mid-term evaluations). Less than half of the shura members reported that there was a USAID sign at the project site at that time (41% of mid-term evaluations). About half (48%) thought that the district and provincial government made a contribution to the project, and that contribution was most often security. Knowledge of funding improved over time. It took some

time to get the subproject signs made and distributed at the start of AINP, but eventually all projects got signs. Permanent markers with credit to USAID for the works done by the project were placed at the end of the project – over 500 had been placed at last count.

AINP engineers frequently did visit the district authorities to discuss plans. It seems that most shuras do not see this as participation. Increased involvement of the District government in the subproject implementation is desirable, but capacity is limited.

e) Security.

The shura members are confident that national staff and international staff can visit the project site (95% of midterm evaluations).

The picture made by the shuras is that security in the project sites is reasonably good. Most thought that national and foreign staff can visit the project site (95% of mid-term evaluations). Several reported finding explosive ordinance (3 cases). One reported a snake bite.

Final evaluations complement the first shura reviews of subprojects. A total of 60 completed projects were evaluated after completion in January. These included 41 canal cleaning, 13 protection walls, 4 karez projects, 1 road project and 1 culvert construction.

a) General satisfaction

The information from the shura reviews was very positive. The final evaluations showed that few shuras reported problems, but that when there were problems, three of four cases were resolved. They are satisfied with the work done (95% of final evaluations) and with the supervision by the AINP staff (98% of final evaluations).

b) Results of the work

The shura members identified the following benefits of the project: income (97% of final evaluations), more irrigation water (72% of final evaluations), and flood protection (23% of final evaluations), with smaller numbers citing improved drainage and agricultural production increase, though the later is also a result of having more water.

c) Sustainability

Sustainability of the subprojects is an important issue, so the responses to the question about who would take care of the works were important. The one to take care of the projects were the community or the local shura and the water master or mirab (confirming the importance of this role in Nangarhar villages. In general, the mirab is responsible to the shura, so there is likely to be joint responsibility in many cases.

d) Allocation of labor

Shuras have made a major contribution by allocating labor among villages. There have been some issues about involving landless laborers or herders in the project. Most subprojects do reach the poor, but some could do more.

The final evaluation asked about women's participation in the project. Most of the shuras recognized that women participated (83% of final evaluations). Most thought that women's participation was a good thing (77% of final evaluations); but the balance either thought women's participation was not a good thing or did not respond.

e) *Security*

26% of final evaluations said that there were unspecified security issues. Half of the shuras reported that they provided security (47% of the final evaluations). A few (2% of final evaluations, with 7% no response) reported that "a few" people opposed the project. Three shuras (5% of final evaluations) reported that the project caused conflict. One case involved closing the flow of canal during work, and two cases are not explained.

Final Shura Evaluation Results

Are you satisfied with the resolution of any issues during the subproject?	
Yes	57
No	3
If an issue occurred, how was it resolved?	
by local shura	3
Not solved yet	1
Solved by district administrator	1
Are the people satisfied with the quality of the work done?	
Yes	60
No	0
Are the people satisfied with how the work was supervised?	
Yes	59
No	1
Who will take care of the works on the subproject?	
The community	17
Local Shura	15
Mirabs or Water masters	10
Other individuals	3
Special shura for the project	2
No one	1
What were the benefits of the project?	
Cash income	58
Increased irrigation water	43
Protection of land or village from floods	14
Improved drainage	4
Increased Agriculture Production	3

AINP Staff Recommendations

A theme repeated throughout this report is that the backbone of AINP was its local staff who were given a great deal of responsibility for implementation. All of the senior Afghan staff had worked on other international development efforts in Nangarhar and at the end of the project were asked to compare AINP to efforts they had been involved with in the past and make recommendations for future projects.

They unanimously praised the project's achievements in terms of labor days, geographic coverage, consultation with government authorities, consistent transparency and low overhead. Predictably, most said they would have liked higher salaries and less paperwork. But a few more interesting themes also emerged in their critiques of AINP.

Monitoring – AINP was perhaps most characterized by its speed. Even before an office was fully functional USAID required thousands of workers to be employed by the project daily. Senior project staff were continually consumed with the task of employing 10,000+ workers daily while designing and gaining approval for new projects to maintain that level. Since it was designed as an immediate response mechanism to the declining opium harvest, AINP's focus was on implementation. The monitoring unit was completely staffed several months after start-up. Having the monitoring effort keep pace real-time with implementation was consequently a difficult task. Engineers sometimes saw the monitors as post-hoc critics, and they resented that. Project management is very glad to have had post-hoc verification of implementation and identification of issues, but agrees that more real-time monitoring would have been useful.

Delegating Authority to Shuras – One of the strengths of AINP was the way it worked through local authorities, mostly village and district shuras or councils of elders. Shuras nominated subprojects, guaranteed security, chose the workers and adjudicated disputes. A member of the nominating shura was always at a subproject site while work was underway. By and large this system worked very well and ensured that AINP was taking into account local realities, customs and needs. It is perhaps the major reason the project was able to operate in all parts of Nangarhar—even those deemed too risky or rebellious by other development projects. Still, the authority given to the shuras assumed that they made decisions in the best interest of their constituents, and a minority of AINP's engineers reported some instances of problems on that front.

The most common complaint regarded who was chosen for work. AINP paid slightly over the market rate for daily unskilled labor, creating competition among employed as well as unemployed laborers for slots on work crews. Hiring in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas, is notoriously based on patronage to family members and close allies, and in some cases it appears shura members nominated those close to them over some of the poor members of their village. This problem was compounded in a few villages by a misperception that AINP laborers were required to be farmers who were no longer growing poppy, thus leaving the poorer landless village residents less likely to be employed by the project.

Government Critiques

The principal critique by government staff, including the deputy governor of Nangarhar who was a strong and effective supporter of AINP, was that the projects were too small and there were not enough large infrastructure projects. He wants to see more asphalted roads, not just rehabilitated earthen roads; he wants larger dams and not just small works on existing canals.

This point is valid in that AINP is and should be part of a larger development agenda that includes larger infrastructure projects. Two points should be noted. It has the advantage that it delivered benefits to hundreds of villages and wages to thousands throughout the province. That is a special task that large infrastructure works would not have achieved. The second is that the aggregate result of AINP's hundreds of works is a substantial increase in the productive capacity of the province, even if no project was large. Some projects had modest impact, but others improved canals, allowed trucks to reach villages, gave women productive capacities, and protected agricultural land.

Replication and its Limits

Assuming that USAID objectives continue to call for employment-generation projects in medium risk areas, can AINP be replicated?

1. AINP's security strategy is not unusual and could be replicated. In this case, support by villagers and others won the day, but a determined, violent opposition could have overwhelmed the support provided by the rural population. DAI, which has projects in Iraq, uses a different strategy in that context. Rather than a blueprint, another project might start from AINP and evolve its strategy by a "learning process" approach.

2. USAID/Jalalabad, DAI and the provincial government wanted AINP to succeed. Villagers appreciated the participatory approach, immediate delivery of work, and clear communications from AINP, and soon came to support the project. The initial framework (technical working group, contacts with governor,

etc.) and the process of gaining acceptance from villagers do seem to be replicable.

3. As a strategy to support reduction in poppy production, AINP is a good place to start. It works well as an initial strategy. Soon, more permanent solutions for alternative livelihoods would have to be found. For one thing, the cost of AINP is unlikely to be sustained. But comparing the financial and human cost of AINP to what it would have cost to eradicate between 16,000 and 26,000 hectares of poppy makes it seem less expensive. As a way to reach more remote areas with marginal economic prospects apart from poppy and smuggling, it will continue to be a good model.

4. The presence of USAID/Jalalabad in the region was positive and, from the contractor's perspective, seems replicable.

5. So long as the general structure of the project uses a "learning process approach" many of the specific elements related in this report are replicable. The participatory workshops, the cluster approach, the initial allocation of resources among districts (so long as it is not a straight jacket), rapid replication of early successes, aiming to deliver work (eventually) in all the settled parts of the province, use of GIS to see emerging patterns, the staffing patterns that were adopted, and other elements of the overall approach used by AINP are replicable in Afghanistan at least.

6. For a contractor like DAI, preparing to implement a good part of any project directly, rather than via subcontractors or grantees, seem replicable and beneficial.

7. The leanness of the budget (the 70:30 ratio for the project as a whole) was feasible for a no-frills approach. It can be replicated. But the project would have benefited from some non-essential elements: more staff for communications, more diagnostic work in the early stages of the project, more communications outreach, and a slightly higher budget for materials. In general, the simplicity of the project goals and the leanness of the budget made it a better project.

AINP Chief of Party Steven Romanoff *(left)* with a member of the Jalalabad PRT, USAID AINP CTO Michelle Parker and her assistant